

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Thursday, 10th May, 2012

Present:- Mrs. A. Bingham (in the Chair); Councillors Buckley, Gilding and Middleton; Messrs. M. Andrew, I. Daines and N. Sykes, Dr. G. Musson, Ms. J. Porter and Councillors Mr. P. Blanksby and Mr. D. Rowley (Parish Councils' Representatives)

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs P. Edler , D. Foster and D. Bates (Parish Councils' Representative)

B35 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12TH APRIL, 2012

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12TH April, 2012 be approved as a correct record, subject to Councillor Blanksby being included in the list of apologies.

With regards to Minute No. B34 (Response to the Localism Act) the Chairman confirmed that she would write to the Secretary of State expressing the Committee's concern at the changes to the independent elements of the new standards arrangements.

B36 CORRESPONDENCE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Consideration was given to the correspondence from the Chief Executive arising from the meeting held on 11th April, 2012 which had been circulated to all members of the Standards Committee. The Chair and Vice-Chair reported that the e-mail reflected in essence their recollections of the discussion.

Resolved:- That the information be noted.

B37 DRAFT REPORT ON STANDARDS REGIME

Consideration was given to a copy of a report presented by Richard Waller, Senior Manager, Legal and Democratic Services, which contained the details of the changes to the standards regime and the options for consideration by the Cabinet with a view to making recommendations to the full Council.

The report included the views of the Standards Committee reproduced in bold italics with the Monitoring Officer's comments immediately following.

The Committee suggested that there would be some merit in the appointment of a sub-committee of the new Standards Committee charged with considering complaints of misconduct by Members and making recommendations to the parent committee as to whether these should be investigated.

Emphasis was placed on the independence of the Standards Committee which had worked extremely well in Rotherham. The Monitoring Officer agreed to amend the report to be submitted to Cabinet by recommending that a sub-committee of independent members with non-voting rights should consider allegations of misconduct referred to the Committee.

The Committee expressed some satisfaction with the new proposals that took

account of the in-depth discussions that had taken place over several meetings regarding the inclusion of independent elements as part of the proposed composition, but suggested that the numbers be tweaked slightly to prevent a tied vote.

Resolved:- That, subject to the proposed amendment that a sub-committee of independent members should in the first instance consider allegations of misconduct, the report be welcomed and the recommendations supported.

B38 REVISED CODE OF CONDUCT

Further to Minute No. 194 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25th April, 2012, consideration was given to a report to Cabinet which set out proposals to ensure the Council had a Code of Conduct in place prior to the new standards regime coming into force on the 1st July, 2012 to reflect the mandatory requirements of the 2011 Act in relation to standards.

The Code could thereafter be reviewed and revised in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Leader of the Opposition with a recommendation for adoption by full Council.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

B39 DRAFT LETTER TO PARISH COUNCILS

Consideration was given to a draft letter which was to be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils highlighting the changes to the standards regime which would apply when the provisions of the Act in relation to standards came into force, expected to be on the 1st July, 2012.

The letter set out how from the 1st July, 2012 Parish Councils would be responsible for making their own arrangements to discharge the duty placed upon them under the Act to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by their Members and Co-opted Members.

Parish Councils had the option of adopting their own Code of Conduct or could adopt the Code adopted by the Council.

The Committee considered the letter's content and suggested that the timescale for responding to the letter should be specified and bear in mind the cycle of Parish Council meetings .

Resolved:- That the contents of the letter be noted.

B40 RICHARD WALLER

The Standards Committee wished to place on record its thanks and appreciation to Richard Waller for his hard work and patience in dealing with all matters and wished him all the best in his future ventures and retirement.