

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
27th September, 2012

Present:- Councillors Beck, Gosling, Middleton, Pitchley, P. A. Russell, Sims and Tweed and also Mrs. A. Bingham, Mr. I. Daines, Mr. P. Edler, Dr. G. Musson and Ms. J. Porter.

Also in attendance was Mr. P. Beavers, Interim Independent Person.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Gilding.

B4 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved:- That Councillor Gosling be appointed Chairman of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2012/2013.

(Councillor Gosling in the Chair)

B5 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved:- That Councillor Sims be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2012/2013.

B6 THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 AND THE STANDARDS REGIME - CURRENT POSITION

Consideration was given to a report presented by Jacqueline Collins, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, which detailed the approvals previously made by Cabinet and the Council to the preparation of a revised Code of Conduct, the establishment of a new Standards Committee and the allowances to be paid and other arrangements to support the standards regime introduced by the Localism Act, 2011.

The report also went on to outline the arrangements that have been adopted by the Council to ensure the maintenance of high ethical standards.

Further information was provided on the revised Code of Conduct which largely reflected the previous Code with revisions to meet the requirements of the Act in terms of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

Reference was also made to the membership of the new Standards Committee and its composition of eight Elected Members, three Parish Council representatives and five Independent Members (who are non-voting members). It was also noted that all the Parish and Town Councils had been contacted to see if they wished to participate in the Council's Standards Committee and to date sixteen Parish Councils have indicated that they wish to participate in the Council's Standards Committee. The Yorkshire Local Council's Association was to run the election to select the three representatives to sit upon the Committee.

Under the Localism Act there was also now a statutory appointee whose role it was to support the maintenance of high standards of ethical behaviour. A recruitment exercise in July was not successful and a further exercise was now

being undertaken. In the meantime the Independent Person for Doncaster Borough Council (Mr. P. Beavers) had been approached and indicated his willingness to act as the Independent Person for the Council should any urgent matters arise. The Council approved this arrangement, pending the formal appointment of an Independent Person.

The closing date for the recruitment process was 28th September, 2012 and plans were in hand for the interviewing process.

It was also suggested that the next meeting received reports on the procedure to consider allegations, whether amendments were required to the Terms of Reference of the Committee and on the outcome of the election of Parish Council representatives.

A number of comments were made on the revised Code of Conduct, which had been submitted for information relating to:-

- Whether or not the word "Metropolitan" should appear in the name of "Rotherham Borough Council".
- Description of the Independent Members and whether they were "co-opted" as "Independent Members".
- Declaration of a personal interest by Elected Members and the duration of the obligation to declare when in receipt of a gift.
- Declaration of a personal interest by Elected Members and when and when not obliged to declare an interest.

It was suggested by the Committee that clarification be sought on the obligations to declare and timescales involved to ensure all declarations were open and transparent and to avoid any misconceived perception by members of the public.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the composition of the Interview Panel and dates for the interviews/appointment of the Independent Person be approved.

(3) That reports on the procedure to consider allegations, any amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Committee and the outcome of the election of Parish Council representatives be submitted to the next meeting in December, 2012.

(4) That clarification be provided to the next meeting on the obligations of an Elected Member in declaring personal interests.

B7

TRAINING/INDUCTION

Consideration was given to a request by Jacqueline Collins, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, which was to ascertain the wishes of the newly established Standards Committee with regards to induction/training requirements and whether they were in favour of Martin Kimber, Chief Executive, being invited to the next meeting to take forward the new arrangements.

Copies of a briefing note to Elected Members and "A Guide for Councillors on the Openness and Transparency on Personal Interests" by the Department for Communities and Local Government were circulated to those present, which sought to provide basic practical information about personal interests now that the new standards arrangements had been introduced by the Localism Act, 2011.

It was noted that a training session for Elected Members would take place on Thursday, 18th October, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. in the Town Hall and a further session arranged for Parish Councillors and Clerks during November, 2012. Details of the dates and times would be circulated should the Members of the Committee choose to attend.

Resolved:- (1) That the contents of the briefing note and guide circulated at the meeting be noted and received.

(2) That an invitation be extended to the Chief Executive to attend the next meeting of the Standards Committee to be held during December, 2012.

(3) That details of the training events be circulated to all members of the Standards Committee in due course.

B8 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next scheduled meeting take place on Thursday, 13th December, 2012 at 2.00 p.m.