

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 November 2009, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Falp, Gifford, Mrs Knight, Mrs McFarland, Mrs Mellor, Mrs Tyrrell and Vincett.

Independent Representatives: Mr C Bennett and Mr P Willers.

Parish and Town Council Representatives: Councillors Polgreen, Singh, and Smart.

Officers: Mr R Inman (Head Of Members' Services and Monitoring Officer), Mr G Leach (Senior Committee Services Officer) and Mr A Jones (Deputy Chief Executive).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Heath, Parish and Town Council Representative Councillor Mrs A Gordon, and Independent Representatives Mrs C Purser and Miss J Ratcliffe.

In the absence of the Chair (Mr C Purser), the Vice-Chair, Mr P Willers chaired the meeting.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2009 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

22. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (2008-09) ACTION PLAN, MID-YEAR UPDATE

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Chief Executive that set out the Annual Governance Statement (2008-09) Action Plan. The Plan had been agreed as an integral part of the Statement of Warwick District Council's Accounts for 2008-09, and the Committee agreed to requested a six month progress report on its implementation.

The Committee discussed the fact that a number of areas had been significantly delayed from their original expected completion target. The reasons for these were explained by the Deputy Chief Executive and were noted by the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(Mr A Jones (Deputy Chief Executive) left at the conclusion of this item)

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

23. WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services that sought approval of the new Corporate Complaints Policy for the Council.

The Standards Committee was responsible for overseeing the Corporate Complaints Policy and approving amendments to it. The current Policy had been under review for some time and the revised Policy now came forward following changes to the procedures followed by the Local Government Ombudsman.

The draft Policy had been considered, by the Local Government Ombudsman, the Council's Executive, recognised Trades Unions and the Employment Committee who were all content with it.

There was a discussion at the meeting regarding the need to ask for equalities information from complainants. It was agreed that this should be a requirement and as well as ethnic origin this should also include questions on age, disability and sex.

In addition there were also some minor wording amendments made to the policy.

RESOLVED that the Warwick District Council Complaints Policy, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved, and come into effect from 1 April 2010.

24. LOCAL DETERMINATION OF COMPLAINTS

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services that detailed the process, established at the previous meeting of the Committee, for Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee of this Committee.

The Committee had previously established a procedure, based on the guidance provided by Standards for England, for handling complaints regarding the conduct of District and Parish/Town Councillors.

Flow charts demonstrating the process for handling a complaint, through an Assessment Sub-Committee, Review Sub-Committee, consideration by a Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee and a hearing by the Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee were appended to the report.

The Monitoring Officer explained that at the previous meeting a Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee had been established. It had now become apparent that the structure would be helpful to understand if there were two separate Committees and therefore the Committee were asked to establish a Consideration Sub-Committee and a Hearing Sub-Committee as set out in the flow charts appended to the report.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

For the sake of clarity it was explained that membership of each of the Sub-Committees would need to be set for each hearing, as set out within the Standards for England guidance, depending on the case, by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the reported be noted; and
- (2) the Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee be split into a Consideration Sub-Committee and a Hearing Sub-Committee with the membership to be determined by the Monitoring Officer and Chair of the Standards Committee for each hearing.

25. WORK PLAN

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services setting out its agreed work plan for the ensuing municipal year.

In addition to the work plan the report also included for information, as an appendix to the report, the log of complaints made to the Monitoring Officer under the Local Standards Framework regard the conduct of Warwick District Councillors and Parish/Town Councillors.

The Committee returned to the discussion on the outstanding targets on the Annual Governance Statement and asked the Senior Committee Services Officer to discuss this matter with the Deputy Chief Executive to see if the completed action plan for 2008 – 2009 could be brought to the April meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the work plan be noted; and
- (2) the register of complaints made to the Council under the local Standards Framework, be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.00 pm)