

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 November 2015 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Davies (Chairman) Councillors; Mrs Bunker, Bromley, Cooke, Mrs Evetts, Mrs Falp, Gill and Mrs Hill.

Also Present:

Independent Person: Mr R Meacham

Officer: Mr G Leach (Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer).

7. Substitutes

There were no substitutes, but apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rhead and Independent Person, Mr Tomkinson.

8. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

9. Revised Code of Conduct for Warwick District Council

The Committee considered a report from the Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer that updated the Committee on the progress made in relationship to; the revised Code of Conduct as adopted by Warwick District Council in February 2015; and the arrangements for a Joint Standards Committee for Warwick District.

Parish and Town Councils were entitled to adopt any Code of Conduct that they felt met the requirements of the law.

In February 2015, Warwick District Council agreed to continue a Joint Standards Committee with all Parish and Town Councils within the District. The Standards Committee was pleased with its ability for inclusiveness by being a Joint Committee and therefore allowing Parish and Town Council representatives to have a vote on matters and, if needed, form part of a Hearing Panel. It was on this basis that they had brought forward the proposals for a Joint Committee. However it was recognised that if all Parish and Town Councils did not agree to be members of the Joint Committee by the end of September 2015, the District Council would proceed with co-opting representatives from Parish and Town Councils to the Committee. This would remove their right to vote on decisions of the Committee or sit as voting members of Hearing Panels. To ensure the Committee could act in confidence of being a Joint Committee, the District Council needed to be able to evidence the agreement to a Joint Committee through minutes of the associated Councils. In addition, the aim of a Joint Committee was to ensure all parties were represented fairly and if some Councils did not wish to join, the District Council felt, to ensure clarity, it should only proceed with co-option to the Committee.

Eathorpe, Hunningham, Offchurch and Wappenbury Joint Parish Council and Shrewley Parish Council had refused the offer to form a Joint

Standards Committee. In addition Ashow & Stoneleigh, Baddesley Clinton, Bishop's Tachbrook, Bubbenhall, Burton Green, Hatton, Radford Semele and Warwick Town Council, had not confirmed if they did or did not wish to participate in a Joint Standards Committee arrangement. Therefore, as ten of the 24 Parish/Town Councils in Warwick District either did not want a Joint Committee or had not confirmed if they did, officers could not provide the assurance to the Council that a Joint Committee could act lawfully across all Parish & Town Councils in Warwick District and could not recommend this approach to Committee at this time.

The recommendation of co-option was to provide the Parish & Town Councils with a voice on the Standards Committee to provide their views, but would remove the right for them to vote on matters being considered by the Committee.

With regard to recommendation 2.4 each Councillor was required, under the Localism Act, to disclose any pecuniary interest within 28 days of election. Copies of these should be passed by the Clerk of the relevant Council, to the Monitoring Officer and the Monitoring Officer should ensure that they were published on the District Council's website. It should be noted that the relevant Parish/Town Council should also publish their Councillors' Disclosable Pecuniary Interests on their Parish/Town Council website. However Warwick District Council had taken a pragmatic view to this and provided a link for each Parish & Town Council to include on their website.

It was reported to the meeting that no Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Forms had been received from either Baddesley Clinton Parish Council and Eathorpe, Hunningham, Offchurch and Wappenbury Parish Council. Two forms were missing from both Councillors at both Weston under Wetherley Parish Council and Radford Semele Parish Council.

There was significant debate at the meeting regarding the recommendations in the report and the Committee was of the opinion that it could not accept this approach at this time. It felt officers should explore the potential for a Joint Standards Committee with those Councils who wished to progress with this, but also contact those who had either not wished to join or who had declined the invitation to confirm their position.

They were concerned about those members who had not completed their Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Forms and determined that they should be written to individually, with wording approved by the Chairman of the Committee, about this matter seeking an explanation.

Resolved that

- (1) Baddesley Clinton Parish Council, Eathorpe, Hunningham, Offchurch and Wappenbury Joint Parish Council, Radford Semele Parish Council and Warwick Town Council have not adopted the revised Code of Conduct and a letter from the Council is sent to them asking them to provide a copy of the Code they are using;
- (2) the Committee writes to individual councillors outlining the issues with regard to disclosable

pecuniary interest and seeking explanation on why they have not been returned to Council;
and

- (3) the Committee writes to Parish and Town Councils about joining a Joint Standards Committee emphasising the desire for a Joint Committee of all Parish & Town Councils and seeking a response to a formal invite to join this by 22 January 2016.

(The meeting ended at 5.35 pm)