

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 23 September 2009, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT:

Councillors Coker, Gifford, Mrs Knight, Mrs McFarland, Mrs Tyrrell and Vincett.

Independent Representatives: Mr C Purser (Chair), Mr C Bennett, Miss J Ratcliffe and Mr P Willers.

Parish and Town Council Representatives: Councillors Mrs Gordon, Singh, and Smart.

Officers: Mr R Inman (Head Of Members' Services and Monitoring Officer, Mr G Leach (Senior Committee Services Officer) and Mr P Morgan (Financial Services Manager).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Falp and Heath, and Parish and Town Council Representative Councillor M Polgreen.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Minute Number 15 – Update on the Members' Allowances Scheme

Councillors Coker, Gifford, Mrs Knight, Mrs McFarland, Mrs Tyrrell and Vincett, Independent Representatives: Mr C Purser (Chair), Mr C Bennett, Miss J Ratcliffe and Mr P Willers, and Parish and Town Council Representatives: Councillors Mrs Gordon, Singh, and Smart all declared personal interests because they either did receive or could receive allowances of this scheme.

14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2009 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

15. UPDATE ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Committee considered a report from Finance that outlined the regulations concerning members' allowances and the current scheme in operation at Warwick District Council.

The Members' Allowances Scheme that was made under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

The Regulations provide that it was for each local authority to decide its scheme and the amounts to be paid under that scheme. Councils were required to establish and maintain an independent remuneration panel which would broadly have the function of providing advice to the authority on its scheme. Local authorities must have regard to this advice.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

Warwick District Council established an Independent Remuneration Panel in 2001. The panel made recommendations which the council largely accepted and set the current framework in place. The scheme was previously reviewed in 2003 and 2008. The current Warwick District Council scheme was attached as appendix A

In June 2009 the Council agreed that the Panel would not sit in 2009/10, but would reconvene during 2010/11 to make recommendations applicable from 1 April 2011. However before this the Panel and its terms of reference should be reviewed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16. COUNCILLOR ROLES DESCRIPTION & CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PROTOCOL

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services that provided the Committee with copies of the Warwick District Council Role Description for Members of the Council and the protocol for the relationship between the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

As part of the Annual Governance process in May and June 2009 the Committee had raised concern that the Role Description for Members of the Council and the protocol for the relationship between the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive had not been produced and asked for these to be completed and reported to them as soon as practicable.

The protocol between the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive had been signed by both parties on 10 May 2009 and was appended to the report.

The Role Description, had existed since 2007 in the form of a leaflet. The leaflet had been circulated to all Warwick District Councillors. A copy of the Role Description was appended to the report.

RESOLVED that both the Warwick District Role Description for Members of the Council and the protocol for the relationship between the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, be adopted as reference documents to the Constitution.

17. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services that set out the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Report about the complaints it had considered about Warwick District Council.

The Annual Report from the local Government Ombudsman was attached as an appendix to the report to enable the Committee to consider and comment it upon it as appropriate.

RESOLVED that the reported be noted.

18. CONSIDERATION AND HEARING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered a request from the Monitoring Officer for the establishment of a Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee would be responsible for considering investigation reports into complaints regarding the conduct of Councillors and agreeing what action should be taken regarding the report. The Sub-Committee would also conduct formal hearings into complaints should it be decided that this was appropriate.

The Sub-Committee would form part of the Local Standards Framework process adopted by the Committee and members of the Committee would be appointed to the Sub-Committee by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman.

RESOLVED that a Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee be established on the principles as set out above.

19. WORK PLAN

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

The Senior Committee Services Officer also reported that the Warwick District Council complaints process had not been brought to the meeting because it required some minor revisions following consultation with the Local Government Ombudsman. A draft had been included for consideration by the Executive at their meeting on 29 September 2009 and the policy was due to be considered by Employment Committee on 27 October 2009. The final version would therefore come to this Committee in November 2009 for adoption.

The Committee discussed the issue that, because of an additional meeting of the Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive would be unable to attend a meeting of the Committee on 11 November 2009. It was therefore agreed that the Senior Committee Services Officer would agree a revised date with the relevant officers and Chair of the Committee and inform the Committee when this would be.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the work plan be noted; and
- (2) at future meetings the log of complaints made to this Council under the Local Standards Framework be submitted as an appendix to the Work Plan.

(The meeting ended at 7.00 pm)