

**Minutes of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee
2 July 2013**

Present:

Councillors:

F. Ayers

P.A. Broom

R.D. Dunn

A.E. Friday

Independent Members:

Mr Murray Litvak (Chairman)

Miss Sue Faulkner (Vice Chairman)

Apologies: Councillors C.A. Bannister, D. Gohil and M.J. Madams

168/13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2013 were approved as a correct record.

The minutes of the Assessment Panel Hearing held on 4 June 2013 were noted. The Monitoring Officer provided an update following the resolution of the Assessment Panel and confirmed that Councillor H had made an apology to the complainant. He would now meet with Councillor H to give words of advice as to her future conduct in public meetings and write to the complainant informing him that the Committee considered the matter to be closed.

The Committee was satisfied that the apology was adequate and the requirements of the Assessment Panel fulfilled.

169/13 Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures were made.

170/13 Review of new Arrangements

The Monitoring Officer advised that this report provided a resumé of the Committee's activity and progress following its first year of operation. It had tested and refined the new arrangements and procedures for Assessment Panels and Final Hearings by considering some case work. The Committee also reviewed the Staff Code of Conduct and supplemented the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Committee considered the publicity for the Code and Arrangements and was satisfied with them.

The Committee went on to consider whether the arrangements for dealing with allegations of misconduct were adequate in their current form. It discussed its aspirations for the timescales within which complaints were dealt with. It agreed to amend paragraph 33 of the arrangements, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report of the Monitoring Officer, to provide for 21 days following an investigation and hearing, for the matter to be concluded with decisions given and announcements made.

RESOLVED:

- (1) To note the current arrangements for publicity of the Code and Arrangements and
- (2) To approve the arrangements for dealing with allegations of misconduct subject to amendment (as shown in italics) of paragraph 33 to read:

“The investigation shall be carried out promptly, with the expectation that all investigations, resolutions and hearings will be completed within a maximum period of three months and that the decision of the Hearings Panel will be given and announcements of such decision made within a further 21 days. All those involved in the complaint should do their utmost to ensure that this can happen.”

171/13 Independent Person Protocol

The Monitoring Officer explained that a draft Independent Person Protocol had been drawn up to provide parameters for the work and conduct of an Independent Person. It was proposed to discuss this protocol with our partners.

Subject to the Committee's agreement of the Protocol, he would approach Guildford BC, Mole Valley DC and Waverley BC, to establish how many Code of Conduct hearings they had held, what they had learned from them and whether they had encountered any issues. He would report back to a future meeting of the Committee, with suggestions for the implementation of a protocol across the four authorities.

RESOLVED to note the draft Independent Person Protocol and the arrangements for discussions with other councils as submitted.

172/13 Work Programme

The Committee received a copy of its work programme for the Municipal Year 2013–2014.

The Monitoring Officer recalled that the Committee had discussed the use of social media in relation to its impact on member and staff conduct at its last meeting. He demonstrated how Twitter and Facebook was used by the Council, their potential pitfalls for staff and councillors and how they differed from LinkedIn. He distributed copies of the Council's Corporate Information Security Policy (Use of Social Networking Sites) and the Legal Services department's Social Media Policy to the members present and asked them to

consider whether there was a need for further guidance and advice on the use of Social Media by staff and councillors.

The Committee was advised that of the two dates offered for the training on the hearings process, 5 September was preferred by most members.

RESOLVED that the work programme as submitted be approved subject to:

- (1) the training on the hearings process for members of the Committee be agreed for 5 September 2013.
- (2) the inclusion of further discussions on the use of Social Media at the October meeting.

173/13 Urgent Business

There was none.