

Minutes of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee
26 July 2012

Present:

Councillors:

S.E.W. Budd

Mrs M. Bushnell

A.E. Friday

Independent Members:

Mr Murray Litvak (Chairman)

Mrs Sue Faulkner (Vice Chairman)

Apologies: Councillors Mrs C.A. Bannister, R.D. Dunn, Mrs M.J. Madams and A.J. Mitchell

224/12 Minutes

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 10 May 2012 were approved as a correct record.

225/12 Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures were made.

226/12 Committee Arrangements

The committee discussed with the Monitoring Officer his report outlining the arrangements for the new standards framework, which had been agreed at the Council meeting on 27 June 2012.

The committee noted that the terms of reference and remit of this committee had been revised to reflect the new statutory framework. This included a streamlined process for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The committee discussed the number of key tasks that needed to be considered by this committee in the forthcoming months and discussed the way forward for prioritising the work with the Monitoring Officer.

The committee received an update from the Monitoring Officer on the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest forms that had been returned by the councillors.

It was noted that under the Localism Act 2011 councils could make their own rules about how interests need to be declared at meetings, to make standing orders about the declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and any other non statutory interests that it felt were required.

The committee discussed the possibility of re introducing a register of gifts and hospitality with an estimated value of £35 (as opposed to £25 under the previous code). It was also felt that the register of interest for members at planning committee meetings should be extended to include immediate family rather than just partners.

The Monitoring Officer reported that one of the new areas in the remit of this committee was the Employee Code of Conduct and that this could be an area that the committee would wish to review in the coming months.

RESOLVED that the Monitoring Officer submit reports to the next meeting of the committee on:

- 1) Registering gifts and hospitality with an estimated value of £35;
- 2) Members interests in planning applications be extended to include immediate family and not just partners; and
- 3) Reviewing the Employees Code of Conduct.

227/12 Independent Persons

The committee noted that at the Council meeting on 19 July 2012 Roger Pett, Tony Allenby and Vivienne Cameron had been appointed Independent Persons. The Monitoring Officer reported on the collaborative arrangements with Guildford Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council and Waverley Borough Council.

The Monitoring Officer reported on the need for a protocol as to how the Independent Persons would be used between the four councils and how they would be allocated to cases. It was noted that an induction session for the Independent Persons was being organised to take place on 6 August 2012.

RESOLVED that the report of the Monitoring Officer on the appointment and induction of the Independent Persons be noted.

228/12 Hearing Procedures

The committee discussed draft hearing procedures that could apply in dealing with allegations of failure by members to observe the Code of Conduct. The new arrangements included provisions for:

- An initial review by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Persons
- Hearing Panel Procedures for Assessment Panels
- Hearing Panel Procedures for Final Hearing

It was noted that these procedures would be implemented immediately but could be reviewed again at the discretion of the committee.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The procedures for the initial Assessment of complaints be adopted subject to a flow chart which was submitted to the last meeting of the Standards Committee being included and deleting paragraph 3.1(c);
- 2) The procedures for the Assessment Hearing be adopted as submitted; and
- 3) The procedures for the final hearing be adopted subject to the inclusion of 'there would be an expectation that the Hearing would sit from 10.00am to 4.00pm and if there was a need for the hearing to continue then the hearing would re convene the following day.

229/12 Training Regime

RESOLVED that arrangements be made after 26 September 2012 for Councillors to receive training on the new standards regime. Two sessions be arranged one to be held during the day and the other one in the evening.

230/12 Next Meeting

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the committee to take place on 26 September 2012 start at 7.00pm and provisional arrangements be made for an Adjourned meeting to take place on 3 October starting at 7.00pm.

231/12 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.