

**Minutes of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee
9 October 2014**

Present:

Murray Litvak (Chairman)

Councillors:

F. Ayers
P.A. Broom

A.E. Friday
I.T.E. Harvey

Apologies: Councillors C.A. Bannister, R.D. Dunn, A.J. Mitchell and Sue Faulkner (Vice-Chairman).

255/14 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

256/14 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

257/14 Independent Person Protocol

The Committee Manager reminded the Committee that it had approved an Independent Person Protocol at its last meeting. The Protocol set out the roles and responsibilities and expected conduct of an Independent Person during their involvement in complaints against members under the Code of Conduct.

She advised that the three Independent Persons (IPs) had discussed the Protocol and reviewed how the arrangements had worked since their appointment, with officers from the four local authorities who used the IPs under a panel arrangement. As a result of these discussions a number of amendments were proposed to the Protocol.

All three of the Independent Persons expressed their desire to continue in the role when their current appointment expired in May 2015. They agreed that a four year term of appointment would be appropriate because it ran parallel with the Borough Councillors' term of office.

Resolved to:

- (1) approve the amendments to the Independent Person Protocol as attached to the report of the Monitoring Officer, and
- (2) agree to recommend to Council the re-appointment of the three Independent Persons for a period of four years from the Annual Council in May 2015.

258/14 Staff Code of Conduct – update

The Committee Manager reminded the Committee that it had considered issues with the current Staff Code of Conduct at its last meeting relating to: the level of disclosure the questions asked for; the consistency of the questions with what is required in the Staff Code of Conduct; the difficulties faced by the Human Resources department with the annual administration of issuing the declaration forms and chasing up responses and the lack of employment action to be taken if individuals persisted in not returning declarations.

The Committee had agreed that: the staff declaration of interest form be re-drafted so that the questions were appropriate to the conflict of interest each was addressing and consistent with the Staff Code of Conduct; a Guidance Note be written to accompany the staff declaration of interest form to assist with its completion; the re-drafted staff declaration of interest form and the new Guidance Note be considered at the next meeting of the Committee; the completion of staff declaration of interest forms be part of the appraisal process from 2015 onwards and following approval of the revised staff declaration of interest form by this Committee, that it be circulated to staff members who had not yet completed a declaration for 2013.

The Committee Manager explained that in re-drafting the declaration form, it had become apparent that there were some inconsistencies in the wording of the Staff Code of Conduct between paragraphs 5 and 11 and that at paragraph 3. Paragraph 3 was amended to be consistent with the revisions in the declaration form.

She also advised that the Staff Code of Conduct itself had sufficient detail to explain what should be declared. Rather than duplicate this in a Guidance Note, the relevant paragraphs had been cross-referenced to each of the questions on the declaration form.

Resolved that:

- (1) the amendments to the Staff Code of Conduct be approved;
- (2) the revised staff declaration of interest form be approved and circulated to staff members who have not yet completed a declaration for 2013 and
- (3) the completion of staff declaration of interest forms be part of the appraisal process from 2015 onwards.

259/14 Members' Training - update

The Committee Manager advised that since the update report considered at the Committee's last meeting in June, (Min 154/14 refers) the Monitoring Officer had agreed that the 8 councillors who had not yet received training in the revised Code of Conduct, adopted on 25 July 2013, should seek 1:1 training with him during normal office hours.

She reported that four councillors had now received that training and one other had a date in hand. There remained just 3 councillors who had not received or sought the training.

Councillors Broom and Friday offered to speak to the 3 councillors about arranging their training.

Resolved that:

- (1) the update report of the Monitoring Officer be noted and
- (2) Councillors Broom and Friday speak to those councillors who have not received training in the Code of Conduct, about arranging their training with the Monitoring Officer.

260/14 Work Programme

The Committee considered the work programme for the Municipal year 2014 - 2015.

RESOLVED to note the work programme as submitted.

261/14 Any Other Business

No other business was reported.