

**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

ON

TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2013

AT

7.00 PM

AGENDA

UNCLASSIFIED

**Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire**

**Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive**



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

Our Priorities

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

The Underpinning Principles

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

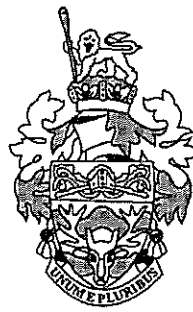
Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

To: The Chairman and Members of the Standards Committee

A Meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** will be held at the Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham on **Tuesday 22 October 2013 at 7.00 pm**

Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive
Monday, 14 October 2013

WBC Members

Chris Bowring
Pauline Helliar-Symons (vice chairman)
Beth Rowland
Ken Miall
Malcolm Richards
Rob Stanton (chairman)

Parish / Town Council representatives

Roger Loader
Roy Mantel
Ray Duncan

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
10.00	None Specific	MINUTES To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12 June 2013.	1
11.00	None Specific	APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence	
12.00		DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest	

- 13.00 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**
To answer any public questions
The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of this Committee.
- Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact Democratic Services on the numbers listed below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions
- Explanatory leaflets are also available in the Civic Offices and Libraries.
- 14.00 MEMBER QUESTION TIME**
To answer any member questions
- 15.00 PARISH /TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME**
To answer any questions from Parish/Town Councillors
- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 16.00 | None Specific | UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK
To update the Committee on Code of Conduct complaints received since June 2013. | 3 |
| 17.00 | None Specific | AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS HANDLING AND HEARINGS PROCESS
To consider proposed changes to the process for considering complaints and for holding hearings. | 6 |
- 18.00 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**
A Supplementary Agenda will be issued by the Chief Executive if there are any other items to consider under this heading

This is an agenda for a Meeting of the Standards Committee

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2013 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.35 PM**

Present:-

Wokingham Borough Members:- *Rob Stanton (chairman), Ken Miall, Malcolm Richards and Beth Rowland*

Parish/Town Council representative:- *Roy Mantel*

Also present:- Susanne Nelson-Wehrmeyer, Director of Legal and Electoral Services and Monitoring Officer. Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer

PART I

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 December 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Chris Bowring, Pauline Helliard-Symons, and Roger Loader, (Parish/Town Council) representative.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME

There were no Parish/Town Councillor questions.

7. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

The Committee considered a report set out on Agenda pages 9 to 10 which set out a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints received against Councillors from within the Wokingham Borough in the period December 2012 to May 2013.

In presenting the report, Susanne Nelson-Wehrmeyer commented that all three of the complaints received since December related to Town/Parish Councillors. She continued that in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted procedures she had as the Council's Monitoring Officer, consulted with the Chairman of the Standards Committee and one of the two Independent Persons appointed by the Council, to decide what action to take in respect of the complaints. In the case of two complaints, a decision not to take any further action had been taken, but one complaint had been referred for an investigation. This investigation was still in progress.

The process by which the results of that investigation would be considered again and if it was considered necessary, referred for a hearing, were outlined to the Committee.

It was clarified that two of the complaints had been lodged via email and one complaint had been received via the facility on the Council's website.

It was further clarified that whilst there was provision for the submission of anonymous complaints, these would only be pursued in the most serious of circumstances.

Rob Stanton commented he felt that the current process for considering complaints was working well so and that the speed of the process had improved in comparison to the previous Standards regime. Roy Mantel commented that from the information available, it appeared that a similar process would have been followed under the previous Standards regime.

Beth Rowland commented that she had the concern that to an outsider, the process for the receipt and consideration of complaints could appear to be incestuous in that Officers and Members inside the organisation were deciding what action to take in respect of complaints against other Members, albeit with the input of an Independent Person. She would have preferred a system whereby complaints against Members were considered by someone outside of the organisation. Susanne Nelson-Wehrmeyer responded that although she acknowledged that point of view, she could confidently say that to date, the Independent Person had offered a valuable and truly independent voice to the process.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8. UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF THE MOST APPROPRIATE DECISION MAKING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WOKINGHAM

The Committee considered a report set out on Agenda pages 11 to 15 which set out the background to the creation of the Decision Making Review Working Group and progress to date. The working group had been established to look at the most appropriate decision making governance arrangements for Wokingham Borough Council.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that if the Council wished to change its current arrangements for decision making, it could not decide to do so until the Annual Council meeting in 2014.

Susanne Nelson-Wehrmeyer commented that the report had been brought to the Committee's attention so that Members were aware that the review was in progress and to highlight that as part of the working group deliberations, the possibility of merging the present Audit Committee and Standards Committee within the broader heading of a Governance Committee had been proposed and discussed although no formal recommendations had been made.

Rob Stanton commented that he was a Member of the Decision Making Review Working Group and commented that the Group was taking its remit very seriously and carefully.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee

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