

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD ON FROM TUESDAY 1 JULY 2014 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.45 PM**

Present:-

Wokingham Borough Members:- *Rob Stanton (Chairman),
Pauline Helliar-Symons (Vice Chairman), Chris Bowring, Ken Miall and Malcolm Richards)*

Also present:-

*Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Moulton, Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance and Improvements Services
Mary Severin, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Borough Solicitor*

PART I

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 March 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that it was intended to bring a revised version of the Member Officer Protocol to the next meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Beth Rowland.

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 on Agenda pages 4 to 6 which set out a summary of Code of Conduct complaints received and actions taken between January and June 2014.

Andrew Moulton, Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance and Democratic Services commented that of the three complaints listed, two had been new complaints where a decision had been taken not to take any further action following the consideration of the complaints by him or the Deputy Monitoring Office in consultation with one of the Council's appointed Independent Persons and the Chairman of the Standards Committee. The third update related to an ongoing complaint which had been referred for investigation. Following the conclusion of that investigation, an apology had been issued by the Member subject of the complaint and the complaint had been closed.

Two of the complaints had related to concerns about the proper declaration of Member interests within Members Interest Forms. New guidance to Members had been issued by the Deputy Monitoring Officer to assist Members in completing their forms.

In addition, new Members of the Council had been given training on declarations of interest as well as the Members Code of Conduct generally as part of their induction training undertaken on 10 June 2014.

Members of the Committee were asked if they felt it would be useful for refresher training on declarations of interests be offered to all Members. Members did think that this would be useful and that some confusion amongst Members between Members Interest Forms and Related Third Party Transactions Form which Members also had to complete.

Members also felt it would be very helpful if Members were given a number of simple practical scenarios where there might or might not be a requirement to declare or register interests. This could be in the form of an informal quiz. It was suggested by Ken Miall that the feedback from this could then be used to inform future training.

In response to a question, Andrew Moulton commented that there was not as yet any evidence of repeat complainants although this was something that was monitored.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be updated;
- 2) That practical scenarios around when it was necessary to declare or register interests be developed and sent to Members;
- 3) That Code of Conduct refresher training should be arranged and offered to all Members.

8. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2014

The Committee considered the draft Standards Committee Annual Report 2014 which had been circulated to the Committee separately from the Agenda. In addition, a draft introduction to the report from the Chairman was circulated at the meeting.

Although technically an annual report, it was explained that the report was the first to be produced since the introduction of the revised Standards regime in 2012. A report had not been produced in 2013 as it had not been felt there had been sufficient information to report upon.

In discussion, a number of typographical errors were corrected and the penultimate paragraph relating to the monitoring of complaints considered by the Monitoring Officer deleted as it duplicated other references within the report to complaints monitoring. Comment was also made that it would be useful to have more information about what the public felt of Members conduct.

RESOLVED: That the Standards Committee Annual Report 2014 be approved for submission to the Council.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee

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