

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 16 MARCH 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.10 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Rob Stanton (Chairman), Pauline Helliar-Symons (Vice-Chairman), Chris Bowring, Ken Miall, Malcolm Richards and Beth Rowland

**Co-opted Members**

Councillors: Roger Loader and Roy Mantel

**Officers Present**

Neil Carr, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
Andrew Moulton, Head of Governance and Improvement Services  
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer

**18. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

**19. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of apologies for absence from Councillor Beth Rowland.

**20. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**21. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

**22. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

**23. PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME**

There were no Parish/Town Council questions.

**24. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 7 to 9, which provided feedback on the operation of the Member complaints process since the previous meeting. The report stated that, since the previous meeting of the Committee in January 2016, three new complaints had been received. Details of the complaints were set out in the Appendix to the report.

Andrew Moulton, Head of Governance and Improvement Services and Monitoring Officer, provided an update to the Committee on the investigation of each complaint. A meeting had been held recently between the Chairman, the Monitoring Officer and an Independent Person to consider two of the complaints. In relation to one of the complaints it was concluded that there had been a breach of the relevant Codes of Conduct. In accordance with Para 9.1.14.2 of the Constitution the matter was being resolved informally by the Monitoring Officer with the use of appropriate sanctions.

In relation to the second complaint it was decided that there was no breach of the Code of Conduct and, as a result, no further action would be taken. The third complaint was still under investigation.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the update report on complaints be noted;
- 2) the Borough Solicitor discuss any potential training issues arising out of recent complaints with the relevant Town Clerk;
- 3) the Committee considers any broader training issues at the next meeting on 6 July 2016.

## **25. TOWN AND PARISH REPRESENTATION ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 11 to 12, which clarified and updated the requirements for representation by Parish and Town Councillors on the Standards Committee.

The report stated that the Constitutional arrangements for the Committee included three co-opted, non-voting, Parish and Town Council representatives. Of the three, at least one should be a Member of a Town Council and at least one should be a Member of a Parish Council. The role of the three Parish/Town Council Members was to be present when matters relating to Parish or Town Councils were considered. At present there was a vacancy for a Town Council representative.

The report stated that the Leader of the Borough Council had requested that the Committee consider whether it was appropriate for a Parish/Town Council representative to also be a Member of Wokingham Borough Council. It was felt that there could be a perceived conflict of interest and confusion amongst residents if a "dual-hatted" Member was appointed to the role. Consequently, the report recommended that the Constitution be amended to clarify the position.

Members also considered the potential scenario where two Town or Parish representatives on the Committee were Members of the same Town or Parish Council. It was felt that such a scenario would not produce the necessary range of views needed to support the work of the Committee. It was moved by Councillor Pauline-Helliard Symons and seconded by Councillor Ken Miall that the proposed Constitutional change be amended by adding the words: "*Furthermore, no Town or Parish Council will have more than one co-opted representative on the Committee*". On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

The Committee also considered the issue of voting rights for the three co-opted Town/Parish representatives. It was felt that this matter should be the subject of a written report to the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the Constitution Review Working Group be requested to recommend to Council that Rule 9.1.1b of the Constitution be amended as follows:

- “b) three co-opted non-voting Parish Members. Of the three Members, at least one Member should be a member of a Parish Council and at least one should be a member of a Town Council. *Town/Parish Councillors who are also Members of Wokingham Borough Council will not be eligible to be considered for these co-opted roles. Furthermore, no Town or Parish Council will have more than one co-opted representative on the Committee.* The process for appointing Town and Parish Council representatives shall be overseen by the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person and any recommended appointment agreed by the Council.”
- 2) the Committee considers a report on voting rights for co-opted Town/Parish Council representatives at the next meeting on 6 July 2016.

## **26. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

The Committee considered its Annual Report for the 2015/16 Municipal Year. The Annual Report gave details of the Committee’s role, composition and levels of activity for the year. It noted that there had been a reduction in complaints activity compared to the previous year.

The report also gave details of the range of issues considered by the Committee during the year. These included revisions to the Code of Conduct and Member/Officer Protocol, updates on the complaints process and guidance on bullying, blogging and the use of social media. The Committee had also sponsored training and support, for example in relation to the declaration of interests.

In relation to the forthcoming year the Committee would continue to seek improvements to the Code of Conduct and supporting procedures to ensure continuous improvement in line with best practice. In so doing it would deliver further training and support to underpin high standards of ethical behaviour by elected Members and Officers across the Borough.

**RESOLVED:** That the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2015/16 be approved for submission to the Council meeting on 24 March 2016.