

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS PANEL - 26 JANUARY 2015

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING - <DATE>

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr Michael Goodridge (Chairman)
Cllr Carole Cockburn
Cllr Jim Edwards
Cllr Jenny Else

Cllr Stephen Hill
Cllr Simon Inchbald
Cllr Peter Isherwood

Apologies

Cllr Diane James, Cllr John Ward and Cllr Kevin Deanus

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN (Agenda item 1.)

Cllr Michael Goodridge was confirmed as Chairman of the Standards Panel for the Council Year 2014/15.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda item 2.)

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor John Ward, Diane James and Parish Councillor, Councillor Kevin Deanus.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3.)

There were no disclosures of interest.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

Background Papers

Unless specified under an individual item, there are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to the reports in Part I of these minutes.

4. INDEPENDENT PERSONS PROTOCOL (Agenda item 5.)

The Council, on 3 July 2012, had appointed two Independent Persons to carry out the roles set out in its arrangements attached at Annexe 1. They were Vivienne Chapman and Tony Allenby.

Waverley had been working closely with Guildford and Spelthorne Borough Councils and Mole Valley District Council on its Code and Arrangements. The first two years of experience had shown that having a protocol for Independent Persons would help these individuals carry out their roles and help Waverley's Monitoring Officer in investigating complaints.

A draft Protocol, drafted by Spelthorne Borough Council and endorsed by all four Monitoring Officers and the shared Independent Persons, is now attached at Annexe 2.

The Panel considered the Protocol and endorsed the approach but as it was recommended that the two Independent Persons be re-appointed for a period of 4 years, the Standards Panel would like an opportunity to meet them. Consequently, they would be invited to the Councillor Induction sessions in May 2015.

The Panel was advised that they would need to seek to appointments to the Standards Panel and Members supported the recommendation that these be sought following the elections with Town and Parish Clerks.

The Standards Panel therefore

RECOMMENDS that

- 1. the Independent Persons Protocol as a supporting document be adopted;**
- 2. the current two Independent Persons for a four year term be re-appointed;**
- 3. two nominees from Town and Parish Councils for the two places on the Panel be sought from May 2015; and**
- 4. the arrangements for dealing with complaints previously agreed by Council in July 2012 be re-endorsed.**

PART II - MATTERS OF REPORT

The background papers relating to the following items are as set out in the reports included in the original agenda papers.

5. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS TO THE MONITORING OFFICER (Agenda item 6.)

The Standards Panel received a report from the Monitoring Officer, Robin Pellow, updating Members on complaints received since it had last met in June 2013 and since the Council had reviewed and made minor revisions to the operation of the New Code of Conduct at its meeting in July 2013. At that meeting Council agreed that the new Council after May 2015 should be asked whether it wished to carry out a further review of the Code.

The Standards Panel was advised that in the last eighteen months four complaints about Parish Councillors had been dealt with by the Monitoring Officer responding; and in four further cases involving Parish Councillors a more detailed initial investigation had been carried out by the Monitoring Officer. The Councillors who were subject of the complaint had been interviewed and the views of the Independent Persons sought on the action proposed. Members noted that these

views had proved very helpful and constructive, and had given the process the element of Independent scrutiny that was important in maintaining public confidence in the new arrangements. In another four cases the Monitoring Officer had discussed issues with the Clerk of the Parish Council concerned and resolved the matter informally.

The Standards Panel was advised it had only been necessary to use the investigative procedure in one case. This case related to a complaint about a Waverley Councillor in connection with a planning matter, and after a thorough investigation the external solicitor concluded that there had not been a breach of the Code.

The Standards Panel was asked whether Members would benefit from receiving a bulletin about cases so that lessons could be learnt from what had happened. Members agreed that these would be useful, especially in the lead up to the Elections. However, they should be anonymised and circulated confidentially to Members only.

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer would arrange training sessions for all Waverley Members on the framework after the May 2015 elections. Training sessions would also be organised for all Town and Parish Councils. However, unlike with Waverley Councillors, it was difficult to enforce training for Town and Parish Councils; however, they would be positively encouraged to attend.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at Time Not Specified and concluded at Time Not Specified

Chairman