

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes

FRIDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillor E Fallows (Chair)

Councillors G Bond, T Hall, K J Jackson, I Lawson and
Mr. H Mawdsley

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D H Ogden

APOLOGIES: Councillor A Banks. Messrs. P Brough, D Fowler and B Steans

8 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN).**

There were no urgent items.

9 **TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Committee held on 21 July 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY:**

There were no declarations made.

11 **PROPOSALS TO UPDATE DISQUALIFICATION CRITERIA FOR ELECTED MEMBERS**

Central Government were proposing amendments to the criteria which disqualify individuals from being elected, or holding office, as a local authority member or directly elected mayor. Paul Rushworth – Corporate Services Manager (Legal and Elections) and Deputy Monitoring Officer – presented the report to members highlighting;- a) the existing criteria and b) the proposed criteria.

The proposed main differences were to prohibit those subject to the notification requirements (commonly referred to as 'being on the sex offenders register') and those subject to certain anti-social behaviour sanctions from being local authority members.

The Appendix attached to the report contained a series of questions which were to form the basis to any response that the committee wished to make in support of the consultation exercise.

Members raised various queries to points contained in the report:-

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- Clarify the term 'Civil Injunction'? (*An injunction against causing harassment, alarm or distress, involving a civil burden of proof*).
- Why were Police & Crime Commissioners not included? (*There were separate disqualification criteria in place specifically for PCCs which included 'any criminal conviction'*).

RESOLVED – That the report be **NOTED**.

FURTHER RESOLVED – That a consultation response be issued to the Department for Communities and Local Government supporting all the proposals contained within the report.

12 **STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

The report was presented to members by Linden Vernon and provided an overview of the issues considered by the Standards Committee during 2016/17 and included:-

- Monitoring complaints received regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct;
- The Annual Letter received from the Local Government Ombudsman;
- An annual review of Councillor development;
- Local Public Services Senior Managers' Code of Ethics ;
- Code of Conduct – Dispensations;
- Review of the Council's Local Ethical Framework.

The Committee had monitored complaints received regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct, whether at District, Town or Parish level. These were tabulated in such a way as to show comparison with previous years and also with the Authority's Strategic Alliance partner – High Peak Brough Council as follows:-

| Year | No. of Complaints | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| | Staffordshire Moorlands Parish Cllr | Staffordshire Moorlands District Cllr | Staffordshire Moorlands Total | High Peak Total |
| 2013/14 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 11 |
| 2014/15 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 3 |
| 2015/16 | 3 | 12 | 15 | 4 |
| 2016/17 | 9 | 16 | 25 | 6 |

Seminars had been run, mainly using in-house trainers, on the following topics:-

- Workshop Raising Awareness of Prevent;
- General Planning Applications Training;
- The Housing & Planning Act 2016;
- Overview & Scrutiny Seminar;
- Safeguarding Training;
- Planning Applications Committee Training;
- Licensing Training.

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A request was made for future reports to contain details of numbers of attendees at the seminars in an effort to understand how to maximise member attendance for the future.

RESOLVED – That the report be **NOTED**.

13 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED - That pursuant to Section 100A (2) and (4) of the Local Government Act , 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100i (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated.

14 **TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

The Committee approved the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2017.

15 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

Members noted the contents of a report in relation to the Local Government Ombudsman’s Annual Letter for 2016/17.

16 **STANDARDS COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT.**

Members noted the contents of a report regarding complaints made under the Code of Conduct.

The meeting closed at 10.22 am

_____Chairman _____Date