

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting held on Tuesday, 19th September, 2017

Present:-

Councillor Mrs H Phillips (Chairman) in the Chair;
Councillors N K Murphy, Mrs L Bastiman, Ms R Swiers, J Warburton, S B Green and
C Pearson, Independent Person Ms R Taylor and Parish Councillor B Marley

Apologies: Cllr G W Allanson, Cllr T Randerson, Independent Person Mr C Langley,
Parish Councillor R Thompson

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The exclusion of the public was not necessary.

5. POST INVESTIGATION REVIEW

The Deputy Monitoring Officer outlined the report, summary of findings and resulting recommendations which was a requirement following a review of a whistleblowing investigation.

The cross party panel of Members had accepted the recommendations set out in the report and the Committee discussed the actions determined.

The Chair commented that she backed the expression of the panel to publish the findings and said that it was an important step forward on the process.

The Committee were advised that face to face refresher training on the Officers Code of Conduct had been delivered to Officers at their team meetings recently and that this would be repeated via E-Learning annually. Members discussed this and stressed the importance of understanding and raising awareness of Personal Interests. It was felt very important that a process be put in place to undertake the required E-Learning and that it should be monitored on how many Officers had completed this and that there should be a cut off time for completion. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that by using E-Learning it was flexible and better in terms of resources which also had a fully auditable trail of who had/had not completed the training and could be sent onto Line Managers with possible disciplinary measures taking place for non-completion. The Deputy Monitoring Officer also

advised that training on Data Protection had been delivered this year to Officers via E-Learning and had achieved a 100% response rate. It was not intended that the numbers of Officers who had/ had not completed the training would be reported to the Standards Committee but statistics could be provided annually by the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

The Chair commented that from the issues and training, not just on the Code of Conduct that it was important that departments had the right skills and support to take on a Whistleblowing investigation. The Deputy Monitoring Officer said that lessons had been learnt and the Council were continuing to move forward.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the Performance Related pay scheme applicable to Senior Unit Managers (SUMS) had been implemented and was now part of the Council's policy and procedure framework with service areas complying with recommendations.

RESOLVED:

The Committee duly noted the summary of findings and recommendations for changes to Council policy and procedures.

6. ETHICAL STANDARDS TRAINING

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reminded Members that the Council had a duty of care to promote high standards for Members and co-opted Members. In May last year 2 training sessions on the Code of Conduct were offered to Members but this had a poor uptake possibly due to some Members work commitments. The Deputy Monitoring Officer therefore proposed that the Standards Committee put forward a recommendation to Council that all Members be required to complete annual Code of Conduct training by way of E-Learning which would help meet the duty of care and also raise the profile of the Standards Committee.

It was seen as extremely important that all Members take training to comply with high standards and to refresh their knowledge and understanding of what may or may not be considered a breach. Councillors agreed that this was a first class idea. As Officers would be required to undertake the training annually via E-Learning then so should Members. It was agreed that knowledge on the Code of Conduct was very important and also impacted on a Members day to day life as a Councillor. Group Leaders could be notified of any Members who had not completed the training.

It was felt that Members who needed Code of Conduct training the most were more unlikely to want to undertake it but it was very important that they did. The Deputy Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that training was given after a full election and following by-elections he met up with new Members to give them face to face training on the Code of Conduct. The Parish Councillor present felt that training on the Code of Conduct would be better delivered in person to Parish Councils rather than by E-Learning and that the training was essential.

RESOLVED that the Deputy Monitoring Officer write up the recommendation to Council on behalf of the Standards Committee that all Members be required to complete annual training on the Code of Conduct via E-learning.

Chairman