

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THURSDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2016

PRESENT:-

Independent Members: Susan Toland (Chair), Deborah Russell

Parish Representatives: Veronica Packham

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Sarah Bevan, Nigel Roberts and Brian Simmons

Officers: Maria Lucas (Head of Legal and Democratic Services) and Enfys Hughes

Observer: Paul Ryan (Reserve Independent Person)

12 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed members that as a result of the resignation of the previous Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons, a new Independent Person and Reserve had been appointed following a recruitment process. She was pleased to welcome Paul Ryan, Reserve Independent Person, who was in attendance at the meeting. The Independent Person, Tony Drew, had not been able to attend on this occasion. Members introduced themselves.

13 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer read out the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the agenda.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION

Apologies had been received from Councillors Sally Davis and Geoff Ward, Dr Axel Palmer and Dr Cyril Davies.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

16 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

17 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS (COMPLAINTS MUST GO THROUGH THE STANDARDS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE)

There were none.

18 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS AND CO-OPTED AND ADDED MEMBERS RELATING TO THE GENERAL BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

There were none.

19 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 19TH MAY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 19th May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair(person).

20 REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS

The Monitoring Officer, Maria Lucas, gave a verbal update report on the assessment of complaints. Four new complaints had recently been received and were in the process of assessment. Two of the complaints involved an incident with two Bath and North East Somerset Councillors. Another involved a complaint by a member of the public against two Parish Councillors and one Bath and North East Somerset Councillor. The last was a complaint by a member of the public against a Bath and North East Councillor. It had been agreed that the investigation of the outstanding complaint would be paused as the subject had only recently contacted the investigator.

RESOLVED to note the verbal update on the assessment of complaints.

21 STANDARDS COMMITTEE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Chair thanked the Monitoring Officer for the report. It was confirmed that before the report was finalised, the Chair would provide her forward and the report would be submitted to full Council in November. An annual report could then be considered by Standards Committee prior to submission to the Annual Council in May.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments/amendments, including the written comments from Councillor Sally Davis who was not able to attend:-

- In section 7 of the report (page 18 and 19) “Bath and North East Somerset Councillor” should be used in full and the description “Parish or Town Councillor” used
- Page 16 last line - to read, “The Committee conducts proceedings...”
- Section 6 (page18) first line – “the Standards Committee agrees...”
- Section 5 (page 18) – to include that a new Independent Person and Reserve had been recruited
- Section 5 delete the word “first”

It was noted that while there was a Reserve Independent Person, there did not appear to be any reserve independent members for the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer agreed to clarify the position of the independent members.

An increase in the number of complaints from 2014/15 to 2015/16 from 16 to 24 was noted. The Monitoring Officer stated that the explanation behind this was that at

least one incident involving the same councillors had resulted in several complaints. The Monitoring Officer would add a note to that effect to the report.

RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair of Standards Committee, to finalise the Standards Committee draft annual report, including the Chair’s forward and taking into account the comments/amendments received at the meeting and prior to its submission to the Council meeting.

22 WORKPLAN FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The meeting was informed that the Standards Committee scheduled for 24th November 2016 would not be needed, as mentioned previously, the complaint could not be dealt with in this timescale.

The Code of Conduct report to be considered at the January 2017 Committee would deal with the issue where councillors were unable to speak on a planning item which involved them. There was a guidance note for councillors written by the previous Monitoring Officer which needed some amendment.

RESOLVED to note the workplan for the Standards Committee.

The meeting ended at 6.49 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services