

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held on 9 February 2022 at 6.00 pm

### **Present**

**Councillors** C J Eginton (Chairman)  
Mrs F J Colthorpe, D J Knowles, C R Slade,  
Mrs M E Squires, Mrs N Woollatt and  
A Wyer

### **Apologies**

**Councillor(s)** L D Taylor and R M Deed

### **Also Present**

**Councillor(s)** D R Coren, B G J Warren and A Wilce

### **Also Present**

**Officer(s):** Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Karen Trickey (District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer), Maria De Leburne (Operations Manager for Legal and Monitoring), Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

### **Also in**

**Attendance:** John Smith (Independent Person)

## **26 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00-02-59)**

Apologies were received from: Cllr R M Deed who was substituted by Cllr D J Knowles, Cllr L D Taylor and R Jeanes (Independent Person).

## **27 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-03-22)**

There were no questions raised by members of the public present in the meeting.

## **28 MINUTES (00-03-30)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## **29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-04-24)**

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations of interest when necessary.

## **30 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00-04-42)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

### 31 **REVIEW OF PROCEDURES (00-04-52)**

The Committee had before it a \*report of the District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer considering a review of the Council's Procedure Rules.

The officer outlined the contents of the report which proposed the formation of a Task and Finish Group to consider amendments to the Procedure Rules and highlighted changes to the Standards Complaint Criteria which had previously been highlighted by the Independent Person.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Whether the cross party group should include members of the committee
- How the members of the group would seek the views of all members and provide feedback
- The need to include one other member of the Committee as well as the Chairman
- An additional meeting of the Committee in April

**RESOLVED** that:

- a) A Task and Finish Group is established (consisting of the Group Leaders or their nominee, the Chairman of the Standards Committee and Cllr Mrs F J Colthorpe) to undertake a review of the Council's Procedure Rules as outlined in Section 2 of the report; and
- b) The Standards Complaint Criteria be amended as outlined in Section 3 of the report.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: \*Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

### 32 **MOTION 577 - COUNCILLOR A WILCE (00-15-57)**

The following Motion had been forwarded from Council on 15 December 2021 for consideration by the Committee:

A Motion to improve public accountability and to address the inequality of rights of Members of the Council, when compared to members of the public.

This Council resolves that:

When an enquiry is made by a Member at any formal meeting (verbally, or in writing) and a substantive answer is not given at that meeting, a written response shall be sent to the enquiring member within 10 days.

Wherever possible, any written questions submitted in the absence of the Member shall be submitted in advance of the meeting, but a failure to do so will not invalidate that enquiry.

A copy of the question(s) and answer(s) will be circulated to members of the committee (or Full Council) and will also be attached to the minutes.

Cllr Wilce was invited to address the Committee: he explained that he had put forward his motion in the hope that it would provide some clarity with regard to how questions from Members were dealt with. He requested that Members had the same rights as members of the public in that any written response to questions raised were published alongside the minutes of the meeting. He added that the contents of the motion may fit well within the review of the procedure rules undertaken by the proposed Task and Finish Group.

It was therefore: **RESOLVED** that the contents of Motion 577 be considered as part of the work of the Task and Finish Group.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

### 33 **MONITORING OFFICER UPDATE (00-25-00)**

The Committee had before it and noted a \*report of the District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer providing an update on conduct matters and to help identify any associated matters for future consideration.

Consideration was given to the Standards Training proposed, new dates would be arranged for in person events which would include an evening session.

Note: \*Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

### 34 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (00-27-00)**

It was suggested that the following items be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee:

- The proposed additional meeting in April would receive an interim report on the work of the Task and Finish Group
- The June meeting would receive recommendations from the Task and Finish Group and also the Monitoring Officer's annual report.

(The meeting ended at 6.27 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**