

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held on 6 October 2016 at 6.00 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs J B Binks (Chairman)
N V Davey, C J Eginton, F J Rosamond,
C R Slade and Mrs N Woollatt

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs F J Colthorpe, Mrs S Griggs, Mrs M E Squires and
L D Taylor

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Amy Tregellas (Head
of Communities and Governance and Monitoring Officer)
and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

14 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs F J Colthorpe, Mrs S Griggs, L D Taylor and Mrs M E Squires who was substituted by C J Eginton.

15 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

16 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

17 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

18 **UPDATE REGARDING MEMBER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Monitoring Officer provided an update to the Committee regarding policies that required completion by all officers and Members. These policies related to areas such as data protection, safeguarding and email use, amongst others.

The Monitoring Officer had written to all Members that hadn't completed their policies a few months ago and the majority had subsequently completed them. However, six Members had yet to complete their policies. There had been some issues with the IT systems but this situation had been resolved and the Monitoring Officer was now confident with the information that had been provided.

It was **RESOLVED** that a letter be sent from the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Audit Committee to those Members with policies outstanding,

reminding them of the importance of complying with the requirement to complete policies. The letter would inform them that should they not complete the policies by the deadline set they would be reported to the Standards Committee. The letter would include a deadline for completion which would be within the period that the current Monitoring Officer was in post. A copy of the letter would be sent to Group Leaders.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

19 UPDATE REGARDING PLANNING PROCEDURES

The Monitoring Officer provided an update regarding Planning Procedures and the recommendation to Council from the Committee which had been approved on 31 August 2016. The officer informed the Committee that all of their recommendations had been approved along with an additional recommendation put forward by the Chair of Planning regarding the length of time that a Ward Member could speak to an application.

20 REGISTER OF INTERESTS

The Chairman had requested that the Monitoring Officer provide an update regarding Registers of Interests.

The officer informed the Committee that she had concerns that Register of Interests forms were not being regularly updated. Forms were often left with empty sections which should be marked as not applicable if there was nothing to report and there was some uncertainty as to whether all Members were including information regarding spouse's interests.

The Monitoring Officer also reminded Members that should they declare an interest at a meeting there was a window of 28 days in which to update their Register of Interest to include this. Regular audits of this area were undertaken.

It was **AGREED** that Members would receive a six-monthly reminder that their Register of Interests form needed to be up to date and what should be included. A regular reminder would also be issued regarding gifts and hospitality.

Discussion took place regarding declarations of interest and it was **AGREED** that a Member briefing be put in place to cover Register of Interests, Declarations of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality.

Discussion took place regarding the completion of forms and the possible move to an electronic format. It was **AGREED** that the IT Service should be urged to move forward with this.

Register of Interest forms were also a requirement for Town and Parish Councillors and it was **AGREED** that a regular reminder be issued to them via the Parish Matters newsletter.

21 COMPLAINTS

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that she was in the process of dealing with four complaints. One of those complaints would be discussed at the next agenda item. The remaining three complaints were in the process of being resolved and the officer was hoping to conclude them in the following week.

22 ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to an individual.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

23 LOCAL INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINT

The Monitoring Officer presented her findings and the Sub Committee recommendation following an investigation of a complaint.

The Committee **AGREED** that in this case the subjects of the investigation were not acting as Councillors at the time but could be perceived to have been.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Therefore as per the Code of Conduct the Committee **RESOLVED** the following:

- a) Recommend to the subject Members Group Leader that the subject Member be removed from all Committees and Sub Committees of the Council for the remainder of the Municipal Year;
- b) Recommend to the Leader that the subject Member be removed from the Cabinet.
- c) That the Monitoring Officer be instructed to explore training opportunities for all Members on Standards in Public Life, including case studies;
- d) That the monitoring officer write to the Mayor of the Town Council to recommend that the subject Members be removed from all Town Council Committees for the same period of time.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: - Cllr C J Eginton requested that his abstention from voting be recorded.

It was further **RESOLVED** that:

The Chairman of Standards write to the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer with a recommendation that they review the Councils role as an accountable body and set in place due practice and procedures following the guidance of the DCLG.

The committee wanted the three posts holders to ensure that the Council suitably and sufficiently discharged its duties and responsibilities as the accountable body in any such circumstances that it found itself.

24 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Hearing Procedures

(The meeting ended at 8.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN