

Cherwell District Council

Standards Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 21 January 2010 at 6.30 pm

Present: Dr Sadie Reynolds (Chairman)
Jim McBeth (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Eric Heath
Councillor James Macnamara
Councillor George Parish
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Douglas Frewer
Kenneth Hawtin
Councillor Alan Greenslade-Hibbert

Substitute Members: Councillor David Carr (In place of Councillor Bernard Lane)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Fred Blackwell□Councillor Ann Bonner□Councillor Rose Stratford□Councillor Bernard Lane

Officers: Liz Howlett, Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Nigel Bell, Solicitor
Alexa Coates, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

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Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

42

Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

43

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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Minutes of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meeting 26 November 2009

The minutes of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meeting held on 26 November 2009 were noted.

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Minutes of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meeting 17 December 2009

The minutes of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 December 2009 were noted.

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Update on Complaints

The committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer which updated members on complaints relating to alleged breaches of the code of conduct received since the last meeting of the committee. The committee were advised that a meeting between the parties involved in the Weston on the Green complaints had been arranged for the end of January. It was hoped that this meeting would resolve the issues surrounding the complaints.

Resolved

That the contents of the report is noted.

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Support to Parishes

The committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer which asked members to consider the support the committee gave to parish councils. The committee were advised of a proposed forum for new parish clerks supported by the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils and District Councils in the area. The committee felt the forum would provide a valuable tool to clerks in the District especially as there seemed to be such a high turnover of parish clerks. Members also felt that the forum would be useful to all clerks and that committee members may find it useful to attend.

The committee discussed the support which they provided to parish councils and the possibility of the Chairman and Vice Chairman visiting parish councils in the District to offer support on the code of conduct and ethical framework. It was suggested that initially support, in the form of these visits, would be offered to parish councils who had indicated they would like extra support and training in their responses to the ethical framework questionnaire.

Resolved

- 1) That the parish councils who requested support and training in their response to the ethical framework questionnaire be offered assistance and guidance from the committee.
- 2) That the proposals for an Oxfordshire Parish Clerks Forum be noted.

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Nomination to Corporate Governance Panel

The committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer which sought the appointments of a member of the Standards Committee to the Corporate Governance Panel.

Resolved

That Councillor Timothy Hallchurch is appointed to the Corporate Governance Panel for 2010/11.

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Operation of The Ethical Framework - Analysis of Responses

The committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer updating members of the results of the Ethical Framework Survey. The committee noted the good level of respondents (57%). The committee felt that it was not appropriate to wait for a new code of conduct to be issued before code of conduct training was offered to parish councils. Training had been requested by a number of respondents. The committee suggested that code of conduct training is offered to parish councils and that there was a particular focus on the local assessment regime and guidance on declaring interests at meetings. The committee felt that visits to the parish councils who had requested further assistance by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the committee would provide a valuable training tool.

Resolved

- 1) That the contents of the report is noted.
- 2) That training on the current code of conduct is provided to parish councils.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

Chairman:

Date: