

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

27 March 2017

Present:-

Councillors A Moulding (Chairman), G Gribble, R Hill, Sir Simon Day, A Mayes and R Saltmarsh

Apologies:-

Councillors C Chugg, A Connett and J Mathews

Mr R Hodgins

15 ***Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2016 be signed as a correct record.

16 ***Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

17 ***Standards Committee Annual Report 2016/17**

The Committee considered the draft of the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2016/17 prepared in line with best practice commenting on its work and developments during the year and on any issues for consideration or development in the future. The draft Annual Report had again been prepared in an easy to read, accessible format.

The Committee acknowledged that the publication, independently, of an Annual Report by the Committee complemented and give rigour to the Council's Annual Governance Statement which it was required to publish on an annual basis.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Gribble, **SECONDED** by Councillor Hill, and

RESOLVED that the Annual Report for 2016/17 be approved and published on the Council's website [<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13628&path=13626>].

18 ***Ethical Governance Framework: Monitoring**

The Committee received the report of the County Solicitor ([CS/17/9](#)) summarising feedback received from Co-opted Members of this Committee on their attendance at meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees since the previous meeting (and since publication of the above also at the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on 7 and 8 March 2017 respectively) monitoring compliance by Members and Officers with the Council's ethical governance framework.

The Committee were pleased to note that there had been no areas of significant concern or any indication of actions or behaviours that might be felt to have resulted in a potential breach of the Code, acknowledging also that steps would continue to be taken to address practical and procedural matters in light of Member's comments arising from both this and the previous monitoring reports in future training sessions and the forthcoming Induction of Members for the new Council.

19 *County Council Elections: Member Induction and Training

The Committee noted that the County Council prided itself on delivering quality induction programmes and on-going training, for both new and returning members, as demonstrated by its having twice obtained Charter Plus Designation for Member Development. Members noted that, for 2017, an induction programme was being developed based on the previous experiences of Members and Officers and best practice across the County, while reflecting the changes to the organisational structure and operating principles of the Council.

The proposed induction programme was considered key in ensuring that both new and returning Members were provided with the skills and knowledge they needed to quickly settle into their roles in an ever changing environment. The programme of events encompassed a range of activities and learning needs at both strategic and practical level and would provide an overview of the Council's activities and how that sat with the Council's Strategic Plan, giving an insight into the various roles of a councillor and guidance and advice on the specific knowledge required to enable them to carry out their duties.

Members commented upon and welcomed the proposed programme noting that co-opted members were free to attend any of the induction sessions consistent with their monitoring role.

Specifically and in relation to the role of this Committee, the induction/training would provide a wide range of advice on ethical governance and standards issues, including the Principles of Public Life, Codes of Conduct, Registers of Interests, Dispensations, Complaints, Procedural and Financial Rules and Equality Matters.

The programme would, in the main, be delivered in house with minimal direct costs, with input from officers at all levels although joint training would be provided with or by partners where appropriate. A provisional Induction Programme was already available on the Council's 'election' webpages to allow potential candidates to see for themselves the range of skills and knowledge required, at <https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/elections-and-voting/elections-2017/member-induction-2017/>, a copy of which had been circulated to Committee Members separately.

20 *Local Determination of Complaints

The County Solicitor reported that, since the last meeting, three complaints concerning alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct had been received two of which related to Councillors failing to treat others with courtesy and respect and a third relating to a Councillor failing to act in the public interest and fairly representing their constituents and the wider community.

Following an initial assessment of each of the complaints and consultation with an Independent Person appointed by the Council on further action, as appropriate, one complainant had subsequently withdrawn the complaint and in the other two instances no further action was taken on the basis that there was no evidence to support any allegation that there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct that might require or warrant a formal investigation.

The Monitoring Officer advised that nonetheless and in each case the Councillor concerned had been given guidance on how to avoid a recurrence of any such allegations in the future.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 2.45 pm