

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Wednesday, 11 February 2015 The Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors P. Lloyd Jones (Chairman), Cole, J. Lowe, McDermott, Parker and Mr A . Luxton (Co-optee)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M. Bradshaw, Mrs Anita Morris (Co-optee) and Mrs D Howard (Independent Person)

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor Kevan Wainwright

Officers present: M. Reaney and A. Scott

Also in attendance: Professor D Norman and Mr R Radley (Independent Persons)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE

Action

STC1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2014, having been circulated, were signed as a correct record.

STC2 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services /Monitoring Officer, which summarised the work of the Committee in the last Municipal Year.

The Committee noted that the major changes to the Standards regime following the implementation of the Localism Act 2011 had become embedded during the municipal year. The Standards Committee was made up of nine Elected Members and two co-opted Independent Members - Mr Tony Luxton and Mrs Anita Morris. It was reported that the positions for the two co-opted Parish Council Members had remained vacant throughout the year.

It was further noted that the Council had appointed three Independent Persons under the provisions of the Localism Act, and all were invited to each meeting of the Committee. The Committee met on two occasions during the year.

The Leader and Chief Executive had attended the April meeting to discuss standards issues from their perspective. It was also an opportunity for them to demonstrate their commitment to the work of the Committee and to the upholding of the highest possible standards of conduct in Halton.

Members then discussed areas of work in which the Committee could be involved, and which came within the remit of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted and referred to Council for information;
- 2) an invitation be extended again to the Parish Councils for nominations to the two vacant positions on the Standards Committee; and
- 3) the Committee receive a report on the Council's Whistleblowing Policy as far as it relates to the remit of the Committee.

Operational
Director, Legal
and Democratic
Services /
Monitoring Officer

STC3 STANDARDS COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services /Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with an update on issues which had arisen in other parts of the country, which provided an insight into the kind of issues faced and the manner in which they had proceeded.

Details on recent cases were given from the following locations:-

- Hounslow;
- Middlesbrough;
- Warminster (Wiltshire);
- Wigan;
- Leigh (Lancashire);
- Ashfield (Nottinghamshire); and
- East Hampshire.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

STC4 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services /Monitoring Officer provided a verbal update on

three recent complaints which he had received.

It was reported that only one of these had necessitated consultation with an appointed Independent Person, in this case Mrs Howard. Both had concluded that further investigation would not be required.

In addition, he reported that since July 2014, he had been working for Cheshire West and Chester Council as their Interim Monitoring Officer, covering a period of maternity leave. This had given him the opportunity to observe operational issues within another local authority. Although he considered the arrangements worked well within Halton, given the small number of complaints against Members that were received, he would consider a review of the Member's Code of Conduct and arrangements for dealing with complaints as a piece of work which the Committee would be consulted upon later in the year.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be received.

Meeting ended at 3.02 p.m.