

STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2015

AT 4.30 PM

IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON

Present:

Mr T Evans Chairman

Councillor J Davis

Mr J Gamlin

Councillor P H Murphy

Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor S O de Renzy-Martin

Mr I Gunn

Councillor N Thwaites

Members in Attendance:

Councillor A Trollope-Bellew

Councillor T Venner

Officers in Attendance:

Monitoring Officer (B Lang)

Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

SA13 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Louise Somerville Williams.

SA14 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

SA15 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 June 2015

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee held on 16 June 2015 - circulated with the Agenda. These minutes were adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 19 August 2015.)

RECOMMENDED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee held on 16 June 2015 be noted.

SA16 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

SA17 **Public Participation**

No member of the public had requested to speak.

SA18 **Code of Conduct Training for Parish Councillors following the Local Government Elections in May 2015**

The Monitoring Officer provided a verbal update in respect of the Code of Conduct Training delivered to Town and Parish Council representatives from both the West Somerset and Taunton Deane areas during September 2015.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that 108 people attended over the four training sessions which comprised of a good cross section of councillors and clerks. The training programme included matters relating to declarations of interest in particular disclosable pecuniary interests and potential criminal offence, and pre-determination issues. The Monitoring Officer advised that an extra session could be held by arrangement for those who did not attend and it was agreed that a request would be sent to all parish and town councils, including West Somerset District councillors, requesting they let him know of the potential interest for further training, or whether further clarification was needed on any of the areas covered. In addition, the presentation slides would also be circulated.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that it was mandatory for parish and town councils to adopt a code of conduct and for all councillors to complete register of interest forms, however there was no requirement for them to attend training.

RECOMMENDED that the Monitoring Officer's update be noted.

SA19 **Monitoring Officer's Update**

The Monitoring Officer reported on activities undertaken since the last meeting and Members of the Committee noted that no formal complaints had been received.

The Monitoring Officer reported that following the post-election period there was a requirement for him to collect all the Register of Interest forms. He advised that all the district councillor forms had been completed and returned, and a list was circulated at the meeting of the number of forms from parish and town councils that had yet to be returned or completed correctly. The first priority was to request the forms be returned as it was a legal requirement for councillors to do so within 28 days of being elected. Members were informed that every parish had sent in some forms.

Members expressed concern that some parish and town councillors were in breach of fulfilling their legal requirement by not returning their form to be registered within the 28 day period, and it was agreed that, in order to help with the chasing up process, a strongly worded email, giving an

ultimatum, be sent to parish and town clerks drawing attention to the fact that councillors would potentially be committing a criminal offence if their form was not submitted and the Monitoring Officer could report them to the police, and request that any outstanding forms be returned with immediate effect.

Members questioned whether West Somerset Council was at fault for not publishing the register of interest forms on its website. As a result of capacity and staff resource issues, the Monitoring Officer advised that the matter was an ongoing issue, and he would prioritise the work and ensure that the information would be available to the public in paper format in the first instance, and that up to date register of interest forms would be uploaded on to the West Somerset Council website in due course. Furthermore, it was agreed to delete any out of date information currently on the website.

RECOMMENDED that the Monitoring Officer's update be noted.

SA20 **Date of Future Meeting**

8 December 2015 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, West Somerset House.

SA21 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded during consideration of Item SA22 on the grounds that, if the press and public were present during that item, there would be likely to be a disclosure to them of exempt information of the class specified in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended as follows:

The item contained information that could release confidential information relating to the identities of individuals. It is therefore agreed that after consideration of all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

SA22 **Appointment of a new Parish Representative to the Standards Advisory Committee**

(Details of the nominations received, the result of the votes registered for each of the nominees and a summary sheet prepared by the Monitoring Officer – circulated with the Agenda.)

On consideration of the nominations received, it was agreed to select the candidate by secret ballot, and it was **RECOMMENDED** by majority vote to appoint Penny Webber to the vacant post of Parish Representative to the Standards Advisory Committee.

The meeting closed at 5.35 pm