

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee
held on 18 June 2013 in the Council Chamber, Williton**

Present:

Mr T Evans Chairman

Councillor J Davis
Councillor J Fulwell
Councillor P Grierson
Councillor P Murphy

Councillor S O de Renzy-Martin
Mr J Gamlin
Mr I Gunn
Councillor D J Westcott

Officers in Attendance:

Monitoring Officer (Bruce Lang)

Meeting Administrator (Elisa Day)

SA1 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Mrs L Somerville Williams.

SA2 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the new District Council Member, Councillor Peter Murphy.

SA3 Appointment of Chairman

RECOMMENDED that the Committee elect Mr Tim Evans as Chairman of the Committee.

SA4 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RECOMMENDED that the Committee elect Mr Ivan Gunn as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

SA5 Minutes

Minutes of the last meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee held 5 March 2013 – circulated with the agenda.

RECOMMENDED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

SA6 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial	Action Taken
Cllr P Grierson	All items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Murphy	All items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and voted

SA7 Public Participation

The Chairman confirmed that no member of the public had requested to speak on any agenda items.

SA8 The Localism Act, 2011 – Register of Interest Forms and Adoption of the Code of Conduct

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that all District Councillors had completed their Register of Interest forms and these were now available on the Council's website.

The Monitoring Officer advised that all Town and Parish Councils in West Somerset had adopted a Code of Conduct and, although the majority of Register of Interest forms had been received, there were still forms outstanding from Brushford, Clatworthy, Exmoor, Kilve, Luccombe, Minehead, Withycombe and Withypool & Hawkridge. He also advised that the Register of Interests forms were currently being added to the website and any outstanding matters would continue to be followed up.

Members enquired if it would be possible to find out the number of 'hits' on the page of the website where the Register of Interest forms were held and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would forward any relevant information on to committee members.

RECOMMENDED that the update be noted.

SA9 Update on Dealing with Complaints

(a) Report on Completed Cases

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that the new system had been in place for nearly a year and up until March no complaints had been received.

He advised that, in accordance with the Council's Complaint Procedure, a summary of the outcome of completed cases must be reported to a normal meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee and this had been sent out with the agenda. The Monitoring Officer invited the Committee to comment on the amount of detail in the summary, taking into consideration that the summary would be a public document.

Members suggested that the summary report should not name the subject Member and that sufficient information should be provided to give a clear indication of the process that was followed, including the involvement of the Standards Advisory Committee, to demonstrate that all complaints are taken seriously. It would also be ideal, where possible, to give an indication of the key issues and rationale that led to the decision taken.

The Committee acknowledged that, if it was found that there was a case to answer, the complaint could go to a hearing which would be held in public and be likely to be reported in the media.

(b) General Update

The Monitoring Officer reported on the latest position in regard to dealing with complaints under the procedures implemented as a result of the Localism Act 2011.

He advised that, as of May 2013, the number of complaints received in the five Districts in Somerset were as follows:

Sedgemoor District	-	0
Taunton Deane Borough Council	-	1 (no investigation)
West Somerset Council	-	6 (no investigations)
South Somerset District Council	-	10 (no investigations)
Mendip District Council	-	27 (no investigations)

The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that at its next meeting to be held in September 2013, a review of the operation of the new Code of Conduct and Complaints process would be undertaken with a view to making any recommendations to the Council.

RECOMMENDED that that future public summaries of completed complaint cases should be prepared having regard to the views expressed by the committee and the progress report be noted.

SA10 Probity in Planning Guide

The Committee considered endorsing the Probity in Planning Guide produced by the Local Government Association.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Council's Planning Manager had been consulted and confirmed that, broadly speaking, the authority's current processes for dealing with planning applications complied with undertake the guidance.

The Committee felt that the document was very good as it was clear and made sense.

RECOMMENDED that the Probity in Planning Guide be endorsed and that the Council be encouraged to use this guidance material when providing training for its Planning Committee members.

SA11 Monitoring Officer's Update

The Monitoring Officer submitted a progress report on activities undertaken since the last meeting. He confirmed that he was still receiving requests for advice on a regular basis and that dealing with formal complaints did generate more work.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

SA12 Dates of Future Meetings

It was confirmed that future meetings of the Committee had been scheduled for Tuesday 24 September 2013, Tuesday 10 December 2013 and Tuesday 4 March 2014 all commencing at 4.30pm.

The meeting closed at 5.50pm