

## **Standards Advisory Committee**

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 18 November 2014 at 14:30.

---

### **Agenda**

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 2 September 2014 (attached).
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests  
To receive declarations of Disposable Pecuniary Interests or personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of the Standards Committee are shown on the attachment.
- 5 Review of Standards Regime. Update as to the current situation by the Monitoring Officer. A copy of a report which was considered and approved at Full Council on 30 September 2014 is attached for information.  
Reporting Officer: Bruce Lang
- 6 Outcome of complaints made against Councillors since the last meeting of the Committee. Verbal report of the Monitoring Officer.  
Reporting Officer: Bruce Lang
- 7 Training for Councillors following the Local Government Elections in May 2015. Copies of the Induction Programme planned before the last Elections in 2011 and the subsequent four year Training Plan are attached for information and comment. Introduction by the Democratic Services Manager.  
Reporting Officer: Richard Bryant
- 8 Proposed Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol. Update report of the Monitoring Officer. A copy of a report recently considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee is attached for information. The appendices referred to in the report have not been provided.  
Reporting Officer: Bruce Lang
- 9 Update report - Monitoring of Standards Issues at Parish Level following the discontinuation of the Parish Liaison Officer post. Monitoring Officer to report.  
Reporting Officer: Bruce Lang

10      Date of next meeting.

Bruce Lang  
Assistant Chief Executive

16 May 2017

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk)



Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

**For further information about the meeting, please contact the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email [r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk)**

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please telephone us on 01823 356356 or email: [enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

### **Standards Advisory Committee Members:-**

Ms L Somerville Williams (Independent Person)  
Councillor J Allgrove  
(Historic)Mr T Bowditch  
Mrs A Elder  
Councillor E Gaines  
Mr M Marshall  
Mr L Rogers  
Councillor P Tooze  
Councillor A Wedderkopp  
Mr B Wilson  
Councillor G Wren

## **Standards Committee – 2 September 2014**

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in Committee Room No. 1, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on Tuesday, 2 September 2014 at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor Wren (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Gaines and A Wedderkopp  
Michael Marshall and Bryn Wilson (Parish Council Representatives)  
Terry Bowditch, Anne Elder and Lynn Rogers (Co-opted independent members of the Committee)  
Mrs Louise Somerville-Williams (Independent Person)

Officers: Bruce Lang (Monitoring Officer), Paul Harding (Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager and Corporate Support Lead)

### **44. Apology**

Councillor Tooze.

### **45. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 July 2014 were taken as read and were signed.

### **46. Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Mrs Allgrove declared a personal interest as Vice-Chairman of the Somerset Association of Local Councils. Councillor A Wedderkopp declared a personal interest as a Member of Wessex Water's Environmental Panel. Anne Elder, declared personal interests as a Public Governor of the Taunton and Somerset NHS Trust and as a Member of the House Management Committee of one of the premises operated by the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution.

### **47. Annual Governance Statement 2013/2014**

The Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager, Paul Harding, reported that Taunton Deane Borough Council was responsible for making sure that:-

- its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper Standards;
- public money was protected and properly accounted for;
- public money was used economically, efficiently and effectively; and

- there was a sound system of governance incorporating the system of internal control.

The Council also had a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions were exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council was responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and the management of risk.

An Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which was compiled in accordance with a Code of Corporate Governance recommended by CIPFA/SOLACE explained how the Council had complied with the code and also met the requirements of Government Regulations in relation to the publication of statement on internal control. The AGS was based on the following six core principles:-

- Core Principle 1: Focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
- Core Principle 2: Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
- Core Principle 3: Promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.
- Core Principle 4: Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and risk management arrangements.
- Core Principle 5: Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective in their roles.
- Core Principle 6: Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The AGS also included a review of the effectiveness of Taunton Deane which had concluded that, overall, the governance arrangements were robust and working effectively.

Noted, however, that during the year the Group Auditor had brought a number of control issues to the attention of the Council's Corporate Governance Committee. The opinion of the Internal Auditors was that the control environment was "reasonable" in 2013/2014.

High priority recommendations had been made in the following areas from audits during 2013/2014 - these continued to be included on the Council's action plan for 2014/2015:-

- Strengthening of contractual arrangements;
- Creditors – purchase ordering and new creditor authorisation processes;
- Equality and Diversity – compliance with requirements and duties;
- Fraud – improvement of awareness of Corporate Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy and Strategy; and
- Information governance – introduction of a confidentiality Code of Practice.

Further reported that the Council proposed over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters in order to further enhance Taunton Deane's governance arrangements.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made (*with responses in italics*):-

- What was the role of the Standards Committee with regard to the AGS? *With regard to this year's AGS, it was submitted principally for information although any particular comments from Members of the Committee would be welcomed.*

*It was recognised that the AGS was a formal document which was not exactly 'user friendly' and that either an AGS summary or, alternatively, an Annual Report should be prepared for next year which could be easily understood by members of the public. It was thought that a clear statement about the current joint management arrangements and an acronym glossary should be provided too!*

- Should the issues in the action plan be addressed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee? *The Chairman undertook to discuss this with the relevant portfolio-holders. There was a need for future AGSs to review the action plan from the previous year to establish whether the required improvements had been undertaken or not.*
- It was hoped that the modified version of the AGS in future could be circulated to the Parish Councils too.
- One of the main points to emerge from the current AGS was the need to ensure there was a good programme of training in place particularly for newly appointed Councillors following the Local Government Elections in May 2015.
- It was all very well putting together such a programme but it was equally important for Members to attend the various sessions. Could pressure to attend be exerted by the Group Leaders? Or by way of an incentive scheme? Should not Councillors require to undergo refresher

training every year? *The more notice that could be given about potential training dates the better chance of Councillors being able to attend. A record of attendance was already kept for training events and these could be made available to Group Leaders if required. Even though Councillors could not be forced to attend training strong 'pointers' could be given by labelling particular sessions as 'Mandatory' or 'Recommended'.*

- The provision of Planning training for Parish Councils was likely to be important too.

At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed that:-

- (1) The ideas put forward to make the Annual Governance Statement more accessible be supported;
- (2) The Chairman be requested to approach the Group Leaders in an attempt to encourage their respective Members to take the opportunity to attend all relevant future training sessions; and
- (3) Details of the Induction Training provided to new Councillors following their election in May 2011 and the subsequent Programme of Training for Members over the four year term be submitted for information and discussion at the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **48. Review of Standards Regime**

Reference Minute No 41/2014 the Monitoring Officer, Bruce Lang, reported that following the discussion that had taken place at the last meeting, a paper had been drafted for consideration by the Council's Constitutional Sub-Committee at its meeting on 4 September 2014.

This proposed that the Committee should have:-

- Advisory status – where any decisions that needed to be taken were referred to Full Council rather than dealt with by the Committee;
- Three parish representatives rather than the two at present who should have full voting rights;
- Full voting rights for the independent members of the Committee; and
- Sub-Committees chaired by any voting Member of the Committee.

In addition, it was going to be proposed that these proposed alterations should be introduced on a cost neutral basis.

If the proposals met with the approval of the Constitutional Sub-Committee, the Corporate Governance Committee and, ultimately, Full Council would also be recommended to approve this particular way forward.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.



#### **49. Forward Plan**

It was suggested that the Committee should consider the following items at future meetings:-

- Following the discontinuation of the Parish Liaison Officer post how Standards issues would be monitored at the Parish Council level; and
- How the new 'Transparency Regulations' (e.g. the recording of meetings) will affect the Council.

#### **50. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday, 18 November 2014 at 2.30 p.m. in the John Meikle Room at The Deane House.

(The meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.)

## **Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors**

### **Standards Committee**

- **Clerk to Milverton Parish Council – Councillor Wren**
- **Member of Somerset County Council – Councillor A Wedderkopp**
- **Member of Wessex Water's Environmental Panel – Councillor A Wedderkopp**
- **Vice-Chairman of the Somerset Association of Local Councils – Councillor Mrs Allgrove**
- **Public Governor of the Taunton and Somerset NHS Trust – Anne Elder**
- **Member of the House Management Committee of one of the premises operated by the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution – Anne Elder**

# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

## **Full Council – 30 September 2014**

### **Review of the Standards Regime**

#### **Report of the Assistant Chief Executive**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams)

#### **1. Executive Summary**

The report set out proposals put forward by the Constitutional Sub-Committee and approved by the Corporate Governance Committee with regard to the future composition and operation of the Standards Regime at the Council. This follows a request from the existing Standards Committee for arrangements to be reviewed with a view to operating in a way that would enable the Parish and independent Members to more fully participate in the process than they are able to do at present.

#### **2. Background**

The Council agreed to retain a Standards Committee to oversee the Standards Regime following the Localism Act 2011 and Appendix A to this report sets out the relevant extract of the Council's Constitution in this respect.

At its meeting held on 8 July 2014, the Standards Committee reviewed the processes by which it currently operated. During the debate there was much discussion and concern shared by all Members of the Committee that since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, the Parish Councillors and Independent Members, who were now co-opted and had no right to vote, and therefore felt increasingly disenfranchised from the process.

In addition, reference was made to the fact that now that only Taunton Deane Borough Councillors had the right to vote there was a risk that the Committee could be perceived as operating in a "political" way when any Standards Regime needed to be perceived as being objective and be able to operate in an independent manner.

The Standards Committee therefore duly agreed to request that the Constitutional Sub-Committee review the current arrangements with a view to making recommendations that would enable the Parish and Independent Members to more fully participate in the process than they were able to do at present. The Committee considered that by enabling them to act on an equal basis would encourage greater engagement, demonstrate enhanced objectivity and dispel any perception of undue political influence on standards issues.

The Constitutional Sub-Committee duly considered this matter at its meeting held on 7 August 2014 and agreed to recommend that consideration be given to amending the Constitution in respect of the Standards Committee as follows:-

- (i) to increase the Parish Council representatives from two to three;
- (ii) the selection process for such membership to be determined and implemented by the Monitoring Officer;
- (iii) Independent and Parish Members of the Committee be granted full voting rights alongside the five elected Members appointed by the Borough Council to serve on the Committee;
- (iv) the current requirement for the committee and all sub-committees to be Chaired by an elected Member be amended so that the the committee and any such sub-committees can be chaired by any Committee Member.

It was acknowledged that in the event of these recommendations being adopted, the Standards Committee would need to become an Advisory Committee in order to comply with the requirements of local government legislation and thereby need to make recommendations to Full Council.

The Sub-Committee was also cognisant of the financial pressures currently being experienced by the Council and therefore proposed that the reimbursement arrangements for members of the proposed Advisory Committee should remain as they were now to ensure that the proposal was cost neutral.

If the recommendations are adopted Appendix B sets out the amended Article 8 in regards to the Standards Advisory Committee, including track changes to set out the changes clearly.

The Sub-Committee submitted its proposals to the meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee on the 22 September 2014 where the proposals were endorsed and it was agreed to seek Full Council approval for the changes.

### **3. Finance Comments**

As referred to above, the intention is for the proposal set out in the report to be cost neutral.

### **4. Legal Comments**

If the recommendations are followed and the Committee becomes advisory then the Council would still comply with obligations placed on local authorities under the relevant legislation.

### **5. Links to Corporate Aims**

There are no direct links to Corporate aims.

### **6. Environmental and Community Safety Implications**

There are no direct Environmental and Community Safety Implications.

### **7. Equalities Impact**

An Equalities Impact Assessment must be carried out if the report is in respect of:

- New initiatives/projects with an impact on staff, service or non-service users;
- New services/changes to the way services are delivered;
- New or refreshed Strategies;
- Events – Consultation/Training; and
- Financial/budget decisions.

There are no significant equalities impacts from this report. The recommendations, if adopted, should enhance the perception of objectivity of how the Standards Regime is operated at the Council.

## **8. Risk Management**

There are no significant risk management issues arising from this report.

## **9. Partnership Implications**

The recommendations, if implemented would not prejudice partnership working, particularly in regard to the Joint Management and Shared Services Project as West Somerset Council does already operate a Standards Advisory Committee.

## **10. Recommendation**

That the proposals made by the Constitutional Sub-Committee and endorsed by the Corporate Governance Committee (set out in paragraph 2 above) be approved, to come into effect after the May 2015 local elections.

**Contact:** Bruce Lang, Assistant Chief Executive  
01984 635200  
Email: [bdlang@westsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:bdlang@westsomerset.gov.uk)

### **Article 8 The Standards Committee**

#### **8.1 Standards Committee**

The Council will establish a Standards Committee.

#### **8.2 Constitution**

##### **(a) Membership**

The Standards Committee will be comprised of:

- (i) Five (5) elected members from each of the political groups who are represented on the Council;
- (ii) Three (3) independent co-opted members who are not Councillors or officers of the Council or of any County, District or Unitary Council or of any Parish Council within Taunton Deane.  
(These are referred to as "Independent co-opted members");
- (iii) (Subject to the same exceptions as (ii) above) two (2) members of a parish council from within the Borough of Taunton Deane who shall represent the interests of all such Parish Councils (the Parish Members);
- (iv) Members of the Standards Committee will hold office from one Annual Meeting until the next - at which point their appointments shall be either renewed or terminated at Annual Council.

##### **(b) Independent co-opted members**

Independent co-opted members (see 8.2(a) (ii) above):-

- (i) Shall be selected in accordance following a recruitment and selection process;
- (ii) Will not be entitled to vote at meetings of the Committee or on any sub-committees to which they have been appointed. Their role is an advisory one.

##### **(c) Parish Members**

A Parish Member must be present at any meeting of the Standards Committee when matters relating to Parish Councils or their members are being considered. Parish members will not be voting members of the Committee and their role is an advisory.

#### **(d) Independent Person**

The Independent Person is a person who is appointed following a recruitment and selection process and carries out the following functions:-

- (i) They must be consulted by the authority before it makes a finding as to whether a member has failed to comply with the code of conduct or decides on action to be taken in respect of that members (this means on a decision to take no actions where the investigation finds no evidence of breach or, where the investigation finds evidence that there has been a breach, on any local resolution of the complaint, or on any finding of breach and on any decision on action as a result of that finding);
- (ii) They may be consulted by the authority in respect of a standards complaint at any other stage; any
- (iii) They **MAY** be consulted by a member or co-opted member of the Borough Council or a Parish Council against whom a complaint has been made.

#### **(e) Chairing the Committee**

The Committee shall be chaired by an elected member.

#### **(f) Sub-Committees**

The Standards Committee shall be entitled to appoint sub-committees or hearing panels to assess complaints received against members where allegations are made that a member has failed to comply with the code of conduct; where this happens the following limits will apply:-

- (i) The quorum (that is, minimum size at which business may be transacted) shall be three;
- (ii) All sub-committees shall be chaired by an elected member.
- (iii) All sub-committees must include at least three voting members.
- (iv) Sub-committees may include at least one co-opted independent member;
- (v) Where a Parish Councillor is the subject of a complaint then a Parish Member (unless s/he is the subject of that investigation) shall be appointed to that sub-committee.

The Standards Committee may appoint a sub-committee to determine any application for a dispensation should time be of the essence in the application (however there must be compliance with the statutory time limits on notification of meetings).

Any sub-committee set up to determine dispensations shall adhere to the limits as set out in (f) above.

### 8.3 Role and Function

The Standards Committee will have the following roles and functions in relation to the Borough Council and Parish Councils within Taunton Deane.

- (a) Promoting and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-opted members;
- (b) Assisting Councillors and Co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (c) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (d) Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (e) Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and any co-opted members on matters relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct and wider propriety issues including issuing guidance where appropriate.
- (f) Granting dispensations to Councillors and any co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct or delegating such power to a sub-committee. Who will be authorised to determine such dispensations based on principles agreed by the Committee.
- (g) Deal with the assessment and determination of complaints under the Members' Code of Conduct relating to Members, Co-opted and Parish Members (other than the power to deal with such matters has been delegated to and exercised by the Monitoring Officer). Where the investigation finds evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and a local resolution is not appropriate or not possible, then a Hearing Panel of the Committee (comprising three voting members of the Standards Committee agreed by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Committee Chairman) will consider and decide the complaint.
- (h) Take decisions in respect of a Member and Co-opted Members who is found on hearing to have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, including:-
  - Reporting its findings to Council [or to the Parish Council] for information;
  - Recommending to the member's Group Leader that he/she be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;
  - Recommending to the Leader of the Council that the member be removed from the Executive Committee or removed from particular Portfolio responsibilities should the complaint refer to a Portfolio holder;
  - Instructing the Monitoring Officer to [or recommend to the Parish Council] arrange training for the member.



- Removing [or recommend to the Parish Council that the member be removed] from all outside appointed or nominated by the authority [or by the Parish Council];
  - Withdrawing [or recommend to the Parish Council that it withdraws] facilities provided to the member by the Council, such as a computer, website and/or email and Internet access;
  - Restricting contact to named officers or requiring contact through named officers; or
  - Excluding [or recommend that the Parish Council exclude] the member from the Council's offices or other premises, with the exception of meeting rooms for necessary for attending Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.
- (i) Advise on the management of statutory and other registers of Interest and gifts/hospitality received;
- (j) Advise the Council on possible changes to the Constitution (except the Council and Executive Schemes of Delegation) in relation the key documents and protocols dealing with members conduct and ethical stanadrds;

## Appendix B

### Article 8 The Standards Advisory Committee

#### 8.1 Standards Advisory Committee

The Council will establish a Standards Advisory Committee.

#### 8.2 Constitution

##### (a) Membership

The Standards Advisory Committee will be comprised of:

- (i) Five (5) elected members from each of the political groups who are represented on the Council;
- (ii) Three (3) independent co-opted members who are not Councillors or officers of the Council or of any County, District or Unitary Council or of any Parish Council within Taunton Deane.  
(These are referred to as "Independent co-opted members");
- (iii) (Subject to the same exceptions as (ii) above) ~~threetwo~~ (23) members of ~~a~~ parish councils from within the Borough of Taunton Deane who shall represent the interests of all such Parish Councils (the Parish Members);
- (iv) Members of the Standards Committee will hold office from one Annual Meeting until the next - at which point their appointments shall be either renewed or terminated at Annual Council.

##### (b) Independent co-opted members

Independent co-opted members (see 8.2(a) (ii) above):-

- ~~(i) Ss~~ shall be selected in accordance following a recruitment and selection process and will be entitled to vote.;
- ~~(ii) Will not be entitled to vote at meetings of the Committee or on any sub-committees to which they have been appointed. Their role is an advisory one.~~

##### (c) Parish Members

A Parish Member must be present at any meeting of the Standards Committee when matters relating to Parish Councils or their members are being considered and will be entitled to vote. ~~Parish members will not be voting members of the Committee and their role is an advisory.~~

Formatted: Indent: Left: 2 cm, Hanging: 1 cm

#### **(d) Independent Person**

The Independent Person is a person who is appointed following a recruitment and selection process and carries out the following functions:-

- (i) They must be consulted by the authority before it makes a finding as to whether a member has failed to comply with the code of conduct or decides on action to be taken in respect of that members (this means on a decision to take no actions where the investigation finds no evidence of breach or, where the investigation finds evidence that there has been a breach, on any local resolution of the complaint, or on any finding of breach and on any decision on action as a result of that finding);
- (ii) They may be consulted by the authority in respect of a standards complaint at any other stage; any
- (iii) They **MAY** be consulted by a member or co-opted member of the Borough Council or a Parish Council against whom a complaint has been made.

#### **(e) Chairing the Committee**

The Committee shall be chaired by an ~~committee-elected~~ member.

#### **(f) Sub-Committees**

The Standards Advisory Committee shall be entitled to appoint sub-committees or hearing panels to assess complaints received against members where allegations are made that a member has failed to comply with the code of conduct; where this happens the following limits will apply:-

- (i) The quorum (that is, minimum size at which business may be transacted) shall be three;
- (ii) All sub-committees shall be chaired by an ~~committee-elected~~ member.
- (iii) All sub-committees must include at least three voting members.
- (iv) Sub-committees may include at least one ~~co-opted~~ independent member;
- (v) Where a Parish Councillor is the subject of a complaint then a Parish Member (unless s/he is the subject of that investigation) shall be appointed to that sub-committee.

The Standards Advisory Committee may appoint a sub-committee to make recommendations on ~~determine~~ any application for a dispensation should time be of the essence in the application (however there must be compliance with the statutory time limits on notification of meetings).

Any sub-committee set up to make recommendations on ~~determine~~ dispensations shall adhere to the limits as set out in (f) above.

### 8.3 Role and Function

The Standards Advisory Committee will have the following roles and functions in relation to the Borough Council and Parish Councils within Taunton Deane and will make recommendations on :-

- (a) Promoting and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-opted members;
- (b) Assisting Councillors and Co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (c) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (d) Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (e) Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and any co-opted members on matters relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct and wider propriety issues including issuing guidance where appropriate.
- (f) Granting dispensations to Councillors and any co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct or delegating such power to a sub-committee. Who will be authorised to determine such dispensations based on principles agreed by the Committee.
- (g) Deal with the assessment and determination of complaints under the Members' Code of Conduct relating to Members, Co-opted and Parish Members (other than the power to deal with such matters has been delegated to and exercised by the Monitoring Officer). Where the investigation finds evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and a local resolution is not appropriate or not possible, then a Hearing Panel of the Committee (comprising three voting members of the Standards Committee agreed by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Committee Chairman) will consider and decide the complaint.
- (h) Take decisions in respect of a Member and Co-opted Members who is found on hearing to have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, including:-
  - Reporting its findings to Council [or to the Parish Council] for information;
  - Recommending to the member's Group Leader that he/she be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;
  - Recommending to the Leader of the Council that the member be removed from the Executive Committee or removed from particular Portfolio responsibilities should the complaint refer to a Portfolio holder;
  - Instructing the Monitoring Officer to [or recommend to the Parish Council] arrange training for the member.

- Removing [or recommend to the Parish Council that the member be removed] from all outside appointed or nominated by the authority [or by the Parish Council];
  - Withdrawing [or recommend to the Parish Council that it withdraws] facilities provided to the member by the Council, such as a computer, website and/or email and Internet access;
  - Restricting contact to named officers or requiring contact through named officers; or
  - Excluding [or recommend that the Parish Council exclude] the member from the Council's offices or other premises, with the exception of meeting rooms for necessary for attending Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.
- (i) Advise on the management of statutory and other registers of Interest and gifts/hospitality received;
- (j) Advise the Council on possible changes to the Constitution (except the Council and Executive Schemes of Delegation) in relation the key documents and protocols dealing with members conduct and ethical stanadrds;

## New Councillor Induction and Refresher Programme

DATE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
<b>Monday 9 May 2011</b>	3pm – 5pm	Penny James, Chief Exec and Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer – also, members of CMT who are available	<b>Welcome session and signing of Declaration of Office</b> 3.00pm – Signing of Declaration of Office in the John Meikle Room – informal meet & greet with CMT 3.40pm (approx) – Reception in Committee Room 2 IT expert to be on hand to offer advice Photos for ID badges
<b>Wednesday 11 May 2011 (and repeated Thursday 12 May 2011)</b>	6pm – 9pm	Ronnie Farley Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer	<b>So Now You've Been Elected – What Now?</b> The Roles and Responsibilities
<b>Thursday 12 May 2011</b>	12.30pm – 3.30pm (buffet available 12noon)	Ronnie Farley Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer	<b>So Now You've Been Elected – What Now?</b> The Roles and Responsibilities
<b>Wednesday 18 May 2011</b>	6.15pm – 8.15pm	Shirlene Adam, Director, Simon Lewis, Strategy Manager and Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer	<b>Briefing on the Core Strategy and Budget Review Project</b>
<b>Thursday 19 May 2011</b>	12.00pm – 2.00pm (buffet available 11.45am)	Penny James, Chief Executive, Directors and Theme Managers	<b>The Role of a Councillor and the Corporate Plan</b> Structure of the Council Theme/service presentations
<b>Tuesday 24 May 2011</b>	6pm	Kate Woollard	<b>Visit to the Nursery, Stoke Road</b>
<b>Wednesday 25 May 2011</b>	12 – 1.30pm	Judith Jackson, Legal Services Manager, Bryn Kitching, Development Control	<b>The Role of a Councillor on Planning Committee</b> **Essential for all councillors joining the Planning Committee**

# JUNE

DATE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
<b>Thursday 2 June 2011</b>	2pm – 4pm <b>OR</b> 6.15pm – 8.15pm	Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer & Chris Gunn, SWAP	<b>Ethical Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Standards Committee</li> <li>• Freedom of Information</li> <li>• Data Protection</li> <li>• Fraud and corruption</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 13 June 2011</b>	12.30pm – 2.30pm (buffet available 12noon)	Claire Bramley, Customer Contact Manager, Richard Bryant, Democratic Services Manager and Kelvin Betty, IT	<b>Getting Things Done – Casework</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer service centres and customer service points</li> <li>• The Role of the Democratic Services Office</li> <li>• Navigating the Taunton Deane Borough Council Website, Intranet and Members' Portal</li> </ul>
<b>Thursday 16 June 2011</b>	12noon – 1.30pm (buffet available 11.45am) <b>OR</b> 6.15pm – 7.45pm	Shirlene Adam, S151 Officer & Paul Fitzgerald, Financial Services Officer	<b>An Introduction to Local Government Finance</b>
<b>Wednesday 22 June 2011</b>	12.30pm – 2.30pm	Richard Bryant, Democratic Services Manager Democratic Services Team	<b>Democratic Processes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision Making</li> <li>• Scrutiny and Councillor Call for Action</li> </ul>
<b>Tuesday 28 June 2011</b>	4.30pm – 6pm	Judith Jackson, Legal Services Manager, Ian Carter, Licensing Manager	<b>Licensing Training</b> Formal Licensing Committee followed by training - **Essential for all councillors joining the Licensing Committee**

## JULY

DATE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
<b>Monday 4 July 2011</b>	12.30pm – 2.30pm <b>OR</b> 6.15pm – 8.15pm	Lisa Redston, Strategy Officer David Woodbury, Health and Safety Advisor	<b>Equalities and Diversity Health and Safety Briefing, including lone working</b>
<b>Wednesday 6 July 2011</b>	6.15pm – 7.45pm	Fiona Capstick, Jill Sillifant & Ian Connor, Southwest One	<b>A Guide to Southwest One</b>
<b>Monday 18 July 2011 (repeated 26 July)</b>	12.30pm – 2.30pm (buffet available 12.15pm)	Richard Sealy, Performance and Client Manager	<b>The Role of the Performance and Client Team</b>
<b>Friday 22 July 2011</b>	10.00am – 3.00pm (lunch and refreshments provided)	Democratic Services Team	<b>Tour of the Borough</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taunton TIC</li> <li>• Priorswood HWRC</li> <li>• May Gurney recycling centre</li> <li>• Wellsprings Leisure Centre</li> <li>• Wellington Community Office</li> </ul>
<b>Tuesday 26 July 2011</b>	6.15pm – 8.15pm	Richard Sealy, Performance and Client Manager	<b>The Role of the Performance and Client Team</b>

## AUGUST

DATE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
<b>Monday 1 August 2011</b>	6.15pm – 7.45pm	Shirlene Adam, Strategic Director, Mark Leeman, Strategy Officer	<b>Tackling Deprivation and Community Development</b>
<b>Tuesday 9 August 2011</b>	12.30pm – 4.45pm (lunch, tea and refreshments provided from 12noon)	Richard Parsons	<b>Confident Public Speaking</b>
<b>Tuesday 30 August 2011</b>	6.15pm – 8.15pm	Joy Wishlade, Strategic Director, Tim Burton, Growth and Development Mark Green, Ian Franklin, Project Taunton Nick Bryant, Strategy Lead	<b>Regeneration</b>

## SEPTEMBER

DATE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
------	------	-----	------



<b>Monday 5 September 2011</b>	6.15pm – 7.45pm	Shirlene Adam, Strategic Director, Jo Humble, Housing Enabling Lead	<b>Affordable Housing</b>
<b>Monday 12 September 2011</b>	5.15pm – 8.15pm	Richard Parsons	<b>Assertiveness</b>
<b>Tuesday 20 September 2011</b>	1pm – 4pm (lunch and refreshments provided from 12noon)	Richard Parsons	<b>Dealing with Conflict and Difficult Situations</b>
<b>Thursday 29 September 2011</b>	5pm – 8pm	Graham Russell	<b>Effective Meetings and Chairing Skills</b>

## OCTOBER

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>WHAT</b>
<b>Thursday 6 October 2011</b>	6.15pm – 8.15pm	Tim Burton	<b>An Introduction to Planning and Planning Enforcement (for Councillors not on the Planning Committee)</b>
<b>Thursday 20 October 2011</b>	6.15pm – 8.15pm	Kevin, Toller, Strategic Director	<b>Time Management</b>

### New Councillor Induction and Refresher Programme – Booking Sheet

**NAME:** .....

Please indicate which sessions you are attending – those marked \* are compulsory.

N.B All events will take place in The Deane House unless stated otherwise.  
Refreshments/food will be provided where appropriate.

<b>Name of session</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Attendance Time</b>
*Welcome session and signing of Declaration of Office	9 May 2011	3pm – 5pm
*So now you've been elected – what now?	11 May 2011 or 12 May 2011	6pm – 9pm 12.30pm – 3.30pm
*Core Strategy and Budget Review Project	18 May 2011	6.15pm – 8.15pm
*The Role of a Councillor and the Corporate Plan	19 May 2011	12noon – 2pm
Visit to the Nursery, Stoke Road	24 May 2011	6pm
The role of a Councillor on Planning Committee	25 May 2011	12noon – 1.30pm
*Ethical Governance	2 June 2011	2pm – 4pm or 6.15pm – 8.15pm
Getting things done – casework	13 June 2011	12.30pm – 2.30pm or 6.15pm – 8.15pm
An introduction to Local Government Finance	16 June 2011	12noon – 1.30pm or 6.15pm – 7.45pm
*Democratic Processes	22 June 2011	12.30pm – 2.30pm or 6.15pm to 8.15pm
Licensing	28 June 2011	6.15pm to 8.15pm
*Equalities and Diversity	4 July 2011	12.30pm to 2.30pm or 6.15pm to 8.15pm
A Guide to Southwest One	6 July 2011	6.15pm – 7.45pm
Performance of the Council	18 July 2011 or 26 July 2011	12.30pm – 2.30pm 6.15pm – 8.15pm
Tour of the Borough	22 July 2011	10am – 3pm
Tackling Deprivation and Community Development	1 August 2011	6.15pm – 7.45pm
Confident Public Speaking	9 August 2011	1pm – 5pm
Climate Change	15 August 2011	12.30pm – 2pm or 6.15pm – 7.45pm
Regeneration	30 August 2011	6.15pm – 8.15pm
Affordable Housing	5 September 2011	6.15pm – 7.45pm
Assertiveness	12 September 2011	5.15pm – 8.15pm
Media Skills	13 September 2011	6.15pm – 7.45pm
Dealing with conflict and difficult situations	20 September 2011	1pm – 5pm
Effective meetings and Chairing skills	29 September 2011	5pm – 8pm
An introduction to Planning and Planning Enforcement	6 October 2011	6.15pm – 8.15pm
Time Management	20 October 2011	6.15pm – 8.15pm

**Thank you for completing this form.**

**To be returned to:** Donna Durham, Democratic Support Manager, Legal and Democratic Services, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE.



## **Councillor Development Events – 2011/2015**

To book a place, please contact Donna Durham on 01823 356382 or [d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

### **Colour key:**

**Mandatory – all Councillors should attend**



**Statutory – if you are on this Committee you should attend to ensure you fulfil your legal obligations**



**Strongly recommended – provides key information relating to roles and responsibilities**



**Optional – skills development**



### **Year One**

So Now You've Been Elected  
The Role of a Councillor and the Corporate Plan  
The Role of a Councillor on Planning Committee  
Ethical Governance  
Getting things done – Casework  
An Introduction to Local Government Finance  
Democratic Processes  
Licensing Training  
Equalities and Diversity  
Performance of the Council  
Tour of the Borough  
Tackling Deprivation and Community Development  
Confident Public Speaking  
Climate Change  
An introduction to Planning and Enforcement  
Regeneration  
Affordable Housing  
Time Management  
Effective Meetings and Chairing Skills  
Dealing with Conflict and Difficult Situations  
Media Training  
Health and Safety  
Assertiveness

## **Year Two**

Code of Conduct  
Conservation  
Housing  
Influencing and Partnership Skills  
Local Development Framework  
Procurement

## **Year Three**

Code of Conduct  
Audit  
Car Park Services  
Project Management  
Questioning Techniques  
Succession Planning

## **Year Four**

Code of Conduct  
CCTV Control Room Visit  
Change and Conflict Management  
Community Services  
Environmental Health, including Dog Warden and Pest Control  
Risk Management  
Sustainable Energy  
Waste and Recycling Services

## **Other**

Speed Reading  
IT  
Leadership  
Stress Management



## **Draft Report to Special Meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council Corporate Scrutiny Committee to be held on 28 October 2014**

### **Proposed Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol**

#### **Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (this matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mark Edwards)**

##### **Executive Summary**

This report provides a background and rationale for the Council to adopt a Social Media Policy and a Recording of Meetings Protocol. The Committee is requested to review the draft documents and provide comment for Council on the proposals.

#### **1. Background Information**

- 1.1 The Council already operates within a world where the use of Social Media is growing and becoming an increasingly significant way of communicating with individuals and organisations.
- 1.2 The Council already uses a Twitter account and currently has approximately 800 Twitter followers which are growing at approximately 100 per month.
- 1.3 In addition, some individual Councillors and members of staff already have their own Twitter accounts and Facebook pages and no doubt going forward this trend will be on the increase as Social Media continues to evolve.
- 1.4 Against this background Southwest Audit Partnership has recommended that the Councils should have an approved Social Media Policy to provide guidance for Councillors and staff and minimise the risk of exposing the Authority to reputational damage. It should be emphasised that such a Policy is not about controlling what people do as individuals but rather providing a framework for them to make informed and balanced choices.
- 1.5 In the light of this advice, Officers have looked at the practice elsewhere including liaising with the Local Government Association and external

specialists and drafted guidelines on how to use Social Media effectively – attached is Appendix A to this report together with a draft Social Media Policy attached as Appendix B to the report and a short summary of the Policy attached at Appendix C to the report.

- 1.6 The Committee is invited to review these documents and make any comments to assist the Council when considering the adoption of a Social Media Policy.
- 1.7 On a related matter, the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 have made it a requirement for Councils to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings. Attached as Appendix D to this report is a relevant section of Guidance produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government in this respect.
- 1.8 In the light of these developments the Monitoring Officers' Group have prepared a draft protocol which is to be considered for adoption by all the Local Authorities in Somerset – attached at Appendix E to this report.
- 1.9 In addition to considering the adoption of this protocol, the Committee may wish to consider making a recommendation to Full Council in regard to implementing the audio recording of meetings open to the public which could be undertaken at minimal additional cost. This would ensure that the Council has at least as accurate a record of any of its public meetings as any individual who may have chosen to record the proceedings.
- 1.91 Both Exmoor National Park Authority and West Somerset District Council have followed this practice for some time and the experience has been positive in that the process has not been found to have been disruptive to the smooth running of the meetings (members just need to speak clearly into the microphones which they need to do in any case to make sure everyone can hear clearly). The recordings also increase transparency and access for the community with recording being available on request and at the National park, recordings of meetings are made available on the Authority's web-site within four working days of the meeting being held.
- 1.92 The Council have already agreed – and allocated funding - to update the microphone loop system and this is in hand to be introduced within two to three months. If the Council did wish to proceed with audio recording the public part of its meetings then all that would be required would be to purchase a small recording device that was compatible with the new system at an estimated cost of up to £200 which could be found from existing budgets.

## **2. Legal Comments**

- 2.1 The adoption of a Social Media Policy produces a risk of corporate social media accounts being misused and becoming the possible source of litigation

claims. In addition the adoption of a Recording of Meetings Protocol would also ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

### **3. Links to Corporate Aims**

- 3.1 This report has no direct links to Corporate Aims although the adoption of appropriate policy should underpin good governance arrangements.

### **4. Environmental and Community Safety Implications**

- 4.1 This report has no environmental and community safety implications.

### **5. Equalities Impact**

- 5.1 The adoption of social media policy should enhance the ability to manage issues and minimise the risk of material on Council Social Media Accounts that could potentially put the Council at a reputational risk for breaching any aspect of the Equalities Act.

### **6. Risk Management**

- 6.1 The adoption of the suggested protocols should minimise the risks of Corporate Social Media Accounts would be misused, and regulated and expose the Authority to reputational damage.

### **7. Partnership Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct Partnership Implications associated with this report.

### **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 Corporate Scrutiny is requested to review the draft Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol and provide comment for Council on the proposals.

## **Standards Committee – 18 November 2014**

Present: Councillor Wren (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Gaines, Tooze and A Wedderkopp  
Michael Marshall and Bryn Wilson (Parish Council Representatives)  
Terry Bowditch, Anne Elder and Lynn Rogers (Co-opted independent members of the Committee)

Officers: Bruce Lang (Monitoring Officer) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager and Corporate Support Lead)

### **51. Apology**

Mrs Louise Somerville-Williams (Independent Person).

### **52. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 September 2014 were taken as read and were signed.

### **53. Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Mrs Allgrove declared a personal interest as President of the Somerset Association of Local Councils. Councillor A Wedderkopp declared a personal interest as a Member of Wessex Water's Environmental Panel. Anne Elder, declared personal interests as a Public Governor of the Taunton and Somerset NHS Trust and as a Member of the House Management Committee of one of the premises operated by the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution. Councillor Tooze declared personal interests as Vice-Chairman of the North Taunton Partnership and as an employee of the United Kingdom Hydrographic Department.

### **54. Review of Standards Regime**

Reference Minute No 48/2014 the Monitoring Officer, Bruce Lang, reported that both the Constitutional Sub-Committee and the Corporate Governance Committee had now had the opportunity of reviewing Taunton Deane's Standards Regime.

As a result, a report had been submitted to Full Council on 30 September 2015 recommending that the Council's Constitution be amended in respect of the Standards Committee as follows:-

- (i) To increase the number of Parish Council representatives on the



Committee from two to three;

- (ii) The selection process for such membership to be determined and implemented by the Monitoring Officer;
- (iii) The Independent and Parish Members of the Committee be granted full voting rights alongside the five elected Members appointed by the Council to serve on the Committee; and
- (iv) The current requirement for the Committee and all sub-committees to be Chaired by an elected Member be amended so that the Committee and any such sub-committees could be Chaired by any Committee Member.

It had been acknowledged by Members that in the event of these recommendations being adopted, the Standards Committee would need to become an Advisory Committee in order to comply with the requirements of Local Government legislation and thereby need to make recommendations to Full Council instead of taking decisions itself.

Full Council was also cognisant of the financial pressures currently being experienced by the Council and therefore agreed that the reimbursement arrangements for members of the proposed Advisory Committee should remain as they were now to ensure that the proposal was cost neutral.

Further reported that the proposals made by the Constitutional Sub-Committee and endorsed by the Corporate Governance Committee had been approved, which would come into effect after the May 2015 Local Government Elections.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

(Councillor Gaines declared that he had a conflict of interest in the following item and left the room during its consideration.)

## **55. Outcome of complaints made against Councillors since the last meeting**

Mr Lang reported that two complaints had recently been received from the same individual in connection with a planning matter in the Wiveliscombe and West Deane Ward.

The complaints had been made against the Chairman of the local Parish Council and one of the Ward Councillors.

The complaints had been dealt with under the agreed procedure whereby information had been collected from the subject Members in response to the complaints. The views of the Independent Person, Louise Somerville-Williams, had been sought and the conclusion reached that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct which warranted further investigation.

The complainant had been advised of this outcome.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**56. Training for Councillors following the Local Government Elections in May 2015**

Reference Minute No. 47/2014, the Democratic Services Manager, Richard Bryant, submitted for consideration details of the Training Programme devised before the last Local Government Elections in 2011.

It was intended to use this document as a template towards the drafting of the new Councillor Training Programme following the elections next May.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:-

- Joint training with West Somerset Council would be undertaken where appropriate to save costs;
- The training provided since 2011 has generally been very good;
- Topics to be included on the 2015 Training Programme should include:-
  - The Taunton Unparished Area Fund;
  - Supporting Taunton Deane's Mayoralty;
  - A briefing on the relationship with West Somerset Council;
  - Finance and Budgetting;
  - Dealing with conflict / difficult conversations
  - Whistleblowing;
  - Risk Management (but not in Year 4);
  - Scrutiny and the use of Task and Finish Groups; and
  - Working with the Town/Parish Councils.
- A 'Buddying System' would be introduced to assist the new Councillors with case work and to assist with all types of query which were bound to arise;
- It was considered essential for appropriate training to be provided to the Parish Councils either directly or via the Somerset Association of Local Councils;
- Another form of training was mentoring through the political groups; and
- It was intended to make full use of the 'Members' Champions' especially through the initial Induction process.

Mr Bryant thanked Members for their contributions which would be considered when the new Training Programme was being prepared.

**57. Proposed Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol**

Mr Lang reported that the Council's Corporate Scrutiny Committee had considered a report on the introduction of a Social Media Policy and a protocol

for the recording of some Council meetings. He explained that the policy and protocol would be submitted to the next Full Council meeting next month for approval.

The Councillors at the Scrutiny meeting had supported these first proposed steps towards making all public meetings fully accessible.

Mr Lang went on to explain that, except for 'confidential items', there was nothing to stop a member of public recording the proceedings at Taunton Deane's Committee meetings. This currently put the Council at a slight disadvantage as it did not have access to 'who said what'.

Subject to Full Council approval, the purchase of a voice recorder which could be linked into the microphone system would enable the Council to record and then keep, for a reasonable period of time, the discussions that took place at its meetings.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**58. Monitoring of Standards Issues at Parish Level following the discontinuation of the Parish Liaison Officer post**

Mr Lang reported that since the discontinuation of the Parish Liaison Officer post in March 2014 there had been very few enquiries from Parish Councils.

It was known that the former post holder, David Greig, had forewarned the parishes about the loss of the post and had encouraged them to make use of the advice available from the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC).

Although the Council had attempted to assist with the limited number of enquiries that had been received, the parishes had been 'sign-posted' to SALC if it was thought appropriate to do so.

During the discussion of this item it was reported that the number of parishes in Taunton Deane affiliated to SALC had increased in recent months which did seem to explain the limited number of contacts made to officers at The Deane House.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**59. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday, 20 January 2015 at 2.30 p.m. in the John Meikle Room at The Deane House.

(The meeting ended at 3.56 p.m.)