

BOROUGH OF KETTERING
STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 28th September 2015

Present: Julie Miller (Independent Member - Chair)
Stuart Kilpatrick (Independent Member)
Phil Carter (Independent Member)
Lloyd Landry (Independent Member)
Brian Christie (Independent Member)
Councillors Groome and Scrimshaw

Also Present: Graham Soulsby (Deputy Chief Executive)
Mike Sawford (Independent Member)
Sue Lyons (Monitoring Officer)
Anne Ireson (Administrator)

15.STA.01 APOLOGIES

None.

15.STA.02 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20th October 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record.

14.STA.03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Phil Carter advised the Committee he had now moved out of the Borough and sought advice about his status on the Standards Advisory Committee. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Council was planning to review the way the Committee operated, including membership, and that Mr Carter's membership could continue for the time being.

15.STA.04 PROTOCOL FOR THE USE OF HAND-HELD ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA BY MEMBERS

A report was submitted which brought before the Committee a draft protocol for the use of electronic devices and social media by Members during public meetings of the Council.

It was noted that, at a previous meeting, it was resolved that a draft protocol be drawn up for further consideration. In particular members' views were sought on whether or not the use of social media in Planning and Licensing meetings should be permitted.

During debate, members of the Committee welcomed the protocol on the basis that the use of social media by a councillor was an effective way of engaging with constituents. It was agreed that the draft protocol reflected all the issues discussed at the previous meeting. However, some concern was expressed that members should not be seen to be distracted by hand-held electronic devices during meetings, as this could damage the Council's reputation. It was felt that the use of social media in Planning and Licensing Committee meetings should not be permitted.

The Monitoring Officer advised that national rules did not prevent councillors from tweeting and blogging at meetings provided it did not detract from the proper conduct of the meeting. It was noted that wider policies were being developed by the Council which dealt with the use of social media, and these policies would also apply to employees.

Once approved by the Standards Advisory Committee, the draft protocol would be submitted to the Council's Executive and Full Council for adoption.

RESOLVED that the draft Protocol be recommended to Executive and Council for adoption, subject to the following:-

- (i) The use of social media be not permitted in Planning and Licensing Committee meetings; and
- (ii) accessing social media sites during the meeting to give contemporaneous comment on the discussion prior to conclusion of the debate be not permitted

*(Voting on part (ii) of the resolution: 4 for;
2 against)*

15.STA.05 REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

A report was submitted which informed the Standards Advisory Committee of the number of Register of Interest forms received from Borough and Town and Parish Councillors following the recent Local Government elections.

It was noted that 34 completed Register of Interest forms out of 36 had been received from Kettering Borough Councillors with 12 towns/parishes still with forms outstanding.

During debate it was felt that, although Register of Interest forms were required to be completed and returned to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of election, there was little to be done at this stage other than to send written reminders to Borough Councillors and clerks of town and parish councils and request that forms were returned within 28 days, with a reminder of their duties in this respect under the Localism Act.

It was noted that the Standards Advisory Committee could report to Council on this matter, if required.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Committee notes the situation with regard to outstanding Register of Interest forms; and
- (ii) the two Borough Councillors whose forms were outstanding be reminded to submit their forms and a letter be sent to town and parish council clerks regarding the statutory requirement for Town and Parish Councillors to return their completed forms to the Monitoring Officer.

15.STA.06 STANDARDS UPDATE

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of the local and national issues arising under the Code of Conduct and Standards Regime.

Town and Parish Council Representatives

Members were informed that former Councillor Neil Matthew was not re-elected to Rothwell Town Council at the recent local elections and as

a result was no longer eligible to sit on the Standards Advisory Committee. There were therefore now two vacancies for town/parish council representatives. Requests for nominations had been sought from town and parish councils via the clerks, and the A6 Towns and Rural Forums. The closing date for applications was 30th October.

Cases of Interest

Two cases of interest were discussed as set out in the report. It was felt that these cases should be posted on the Members' Intranet as they would be of interest to all councillors.

AGREED that case studies be included as part of the Induction Training in future.

Standards Training

A training session on Ethical Governance was held on 20th July 2015 and was attended by the Chair and Independent Member. However, the number of councillors attending the session was poor and it was proposed to repeat the session early in 2016, possibly at a different time of day, and also offer 1-1 sessions if required. The Committee recommended that Standards training be made compulsory for all members.

It was felt to be useful to post the presentation given on 20th July on the Members Intranet, along with links to Standards Advisory Committee agendas and minutes.

AGREED that:

- (i) Standards Training be compulsory for all new members; and
- (ii) video training and on-line training tools be considered in future, in addition to traditional training methods.

Complaints

It was noted that no complaints had been received since the last meeting.

Future Role of the Standards Advisory Committee

The Monitoring Officer reported that the new Standards arrangements had now been operational since 2011 and the role of the Committee was due to be reviewed. Although the new system had not been tried and tested because there had been no complaints, the Council was in a good position.

The Council had previously indicated its wish that the new arrangements should, as far as possible, mirror the old arrangements, and although these had not been tested, the arrangements provided a good mechanism to remind councillors that Standards was strongly embedded in its Constitution. The Committee also had a role in formulation of policy, and it was felt to be important that its membership was kept refreshed, but also to ensure there was a balance on the Committee with experienced members continuing to serve.

In discussion, it was felt that it was difficult to encourage new people to join the Committee. However, it was acknowledged that once the two town/parish members had been recruited, the Committee would once again be up to its full complement of members.

The new town/parish representatives on the Committee would receive full training once appointed.

(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 7.40 pm)

Signed
Chair

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