

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 27th February 2017

Present: Julie Miller (Independent Member - Chair)
Stuart Kilpatrick (Independent Member)
Phil Carter (Independent Member)
Brian Christie (Independent Member)
Douglas Hodgkinson (Town/Parish Member)
Sally McKeown (Town/Parish Member)
Councillor Ruth Groome
Councillor Cliff Moreton
Councillor Jonathan West

Also Present: Mike Sawford (Independent Member)
Sue Lyons (Monitoring Officer)
Joanne Perry (Executive Liaison Officer)
Anne Ireson (Administrator)

16.STA.01 APOLOGIES

None.

16.STA.02 MINUTES

In response to a question about training for new members, it was noted that there had been an ongoing programme. Two new members had been elected in by-elections and ongoing Standards training would be available for them, together with refresher training for all members following the Annual Council meeting in May.

Town/Parish members of the Standards Advisory Committee would receive training when there were issues to be dealt with. NALC training on Standards was available to all town and parish councillors.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28th September 2015 be approved and signed as a correct record.

16.STA.03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16.STA.04 STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE START TIME

A report was submitted which provided members with the opportunity of deciding whether to alter the start time of Standards Advisory Committee meetings.

RESOLVED that meetings continue to start at 7.00 pm.

15.STA.05 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

A report was submitted which presented the revised Whistleblowing Policy to the Standards Advisory Committee for overview and comment.

The new policy incorporated changes to reflect changes in legislation over the last 2-3 years, and had been endorsed by the Kettering Branch of UNISON. Once adopted, training for new staff would be available as part of the induction programme. The existing policy had been used infrequently over the past few years.

Discussion was held on allegations that may be made anonymously, and it was noted that allegations would be reported to the Head of Democratic and Legal Services in the first instance and then discussed with the Section 151 Officer and Managing Director so that the appropriate people were made aware of the allegation. If an anonymous allegation was made, this could be investigated. However, it was felt that anonymous allegations would be rare.

The Committee felt that there was potential for injustice to be caused if an anonymous allegation was made, and it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would look at the wording of the final document to ensure information received anonymously could be considered against a range of ways for it to be dealt with.

Following further discussion, it was noted that new anti-fraud and corruption policies would sit alongside the Whistleblowing Policy and would be especially relevant to those members of staff dealing with

resources on a day to day basis. It was also felt that staff should be required to sign to say they had read the new Whistleblowing policy and it was agreed that this would be looked at.

The Whistleblowing Policy, once approved by Council, would form part of the Council's Constitution.

In summary, the Committee made the following points to be forwarded to the Council's Executive:-

- Complaints made anonymously should be treated equally and the wording "much less powerful" in paragraph 5.2 should be amended
- Members of staff should be required to give a signature to testify that they have received a copy of the Whistleblowing Policy and have read it
- The meaning of "testing out" in paragraph 8.1 should be clarified

RESOLVED that subject to consideration of the above points, the policy be recommended to the Executive

16.STA.06 STANDARDS UPDATE

A report was submitted which updated the Committee on Standards matters and informed the Committee of Code of Conduct complaints received.

It was noted that the Committee for Standards in Public Life had expressed an interest in meeting with Monitoring Officers in Northamptonshire in the next few months. The Committee was invited to let the Monitoring Officer know by the end of May if there was anything they wished to bring to their attention.

Discussion was held on the future of Standards Advisory Committees and it was noted that, across the country, in many cases the functions of these committees had been amalgamated within the terms of reference of Monitoring and Audit Committees. It was intended to review Standards in the next few months after the change in the senior management structure in June.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16.STA.07 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

A report was considered which provided Members with information relating to complaints determined by the Local Government Ombudsman during 2014/15, 2015/16 and the first part of 2016/17, and those where a compensatory payment was made.

It was noted that if a judgement on a complaint was upheld and this indicated a service failure, this would be routinely looked at, together with any compensation, on a case by case basis.

RESOLVED that complaints determined by the Local Government Ombudsman during 2014/15, 2015/16 and the first six months of 2016/17, including where a compensatory payment had been made, be noted.

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

Signed
Chair

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