

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

23 June 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors P. English (Chair), Kelly (Vice-Chair), Bicknell, Caffyn, Coster, Daniells, Gregory and Edwards (Substitute for J. English)

Councillors Gunner was also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Also present was Independent Person Mr J Thompson

[Note: Councillors P. English and Coster were absent from the meeting during Minute numbers 99-101]

88. WELCOME

After welcoming Members and Officers to the meeting, the Chair welcomed the new Group Head of Law and Governance, Daniel Bainbridge.

89. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Independent Person Mrs Sandra Prail, and Councillor J. English

90. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P. English declared a Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Items 11-13 as his name was on a complaint. He confirmed that he would be leaving the meeting during discussion of those items.

Councillor Coster declared a Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Items 11-13. He confirmed that he would be leaving the meeting during discussion of those items.

91. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2022 were approved by the Committee. These would be signed after the meeting.

92. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA WHICH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent matters for this meeting.

93. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that no questions had been submitted for this meeting.

Standards Committee - 23.06.22

94. START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings for 2022/23 be 6.00pm.

95. MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Upon invitation of the Chair, the Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report. He explained that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the work of the Monitoring Officer relevant to this Committee. He then briefly summarised each of the areas contained in the report, and offered to answer Member questions at each stage.

The Interim Monitoring Officer provided an update to Members regarding the Member Training Schedule in respect of Councillor Roberts as a new Member and Chair of the Licensing Committee. In preparing for the two items that were on the agenda for the meeting of the Licensing Committee on 17 June 2022, Councillor Roberts received one to one training delivered by Nat Slade and Neil Williamson on 16 June 2022 at 3.00 pm. This had only been offered to Councillor Roberts in recognition that he was the only new Member to be appointed to the Licensing Committee following the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 18 May 2022. The training delivered covered all of the parameters needed for Councillor Roberts to Chair the 17 June 2022 meeting of the Licensing Committee. Councillor Roberts was also booked to attend a virtual training session with the Institute of Licensing on 14 July 2022 which all other members of the Licensing Committee attended during the last Municipal Year. This was the first opportunity for Councillor Roberts to attend this training and would be completed well in advance of the Licensing Committee taking place on 9 September 2022.

There was a discussion regarding the training matrix and whether this was clear enough. It was suggested that a second row for those trained to sit as a substitute on Standards Committee was unnecessary, and those trained as substitutes should be under the Standards Committee section. This also applied for other Committees such as Planning Committee and Planning Policy Committee. The Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed that this would be looked at by Officers.

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor English and Seconded by Councillor Caffyn.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That they note the Monitoring Officer Report and supported the proposed items for the future workplan.

96. REVIEW OF THE 2021 MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT IN REGARD TO THE TREATMENT OF REGISTRATION AND DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Upon invitation of the Chair, the Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report, which contained two aspects, the first relating to the flowchart, the second that if Members supported the flowchart, it was requested that this be circulated to all Councillors. The Interim Monitoring Officer did not recommend adding the flowchart to the Code of Conduct. He explained why the Arun flowchart was different from that of the Bognor Regis Town Council, and that Officers had tried to make it specific to Arun's Code of Conduct.

Members then took part in a discussion where the following points were raised:

Clarification was sought around the bias test. The Interim Monitoring Officer explained that this was directed to Councillors, as it was for them to try and apply the test to themselves. It was for the Monitoring Officer to assist Members with this if necessary.

It was asked whether more detailed examples of the different interests could be listed, however many felt this may be misleading as interests should be taken on a case-by-case basis. The Group Head of Law and Governance explained that Section 3 and 4 of the Code set out the test for what were personal and prejudicial interests. He felt examples should be covered via ongoing training. Members should take advice from the Monitoring Officer if there was any doubt surrounding their interests relating to specific Items.

Clarification about the Predetermination test was requested. The Interim Monitoring Officer explained that these issues tended to arise in Licencing and Planning, and in other Committees to a different degree. He explained Members should not go to a meeting close-minded as this would then be classed as predetermined. Members should listen to debate and be open to having their minds changed.

The Interim Monitoring Officer went on to explain that it was not recommended to add the flowchart into the Code of Conduct, and it should be used as guidance only. It was asked by a Member that this flowchart be included in the Induction Pack for new Members, and also be circulated to every Councillor.

Standards Committee - 23.06.22

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Kelly and Seconded by Councillor Edwards.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the flowchart be adopted and circulated to all Members.

97. MEMBER LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT - DRAFT MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME

Upon invitation of the Chair, the Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report. He explained that the purpose of bringing the report to the Committee was to ensure Members were largely happy with the suggested plan, in order for Officers to begin making bids to ensure the training for Members could be properly funded. He went on to explain that this report covered the first part of the Member learning and development which was the induction of Members, and that the ongoing Member training and development opportunities would be discussed at the next meeting.

Members (and a non-Committee Member given permission to speak by the Committee) then took part in a discussion where the following points were raised:

- The Code of Conduct should form part of the welcome pack given to new Members.
- It was felt that Modules 2 and 3 should be 'in person' training as opposed to virtual, and this should take place in the Chamber to allow new Members to become familiar with the equipment and the Chamber itself.
- There should be an explanation to all new Members of what each Committee covered and was responsible for.
- Module 5 should be face-to-face, and it was suggested that a less formal get together be held to allow Members to network and get to know each other, which may encourage good working relations between Councillors.
- The induction should include 'how to do your job as a Councillor', who to go to for answers, and the powers of the Council
- There was further support for face-to-face as opposed to virtual inductions.

The Interim Monitoring Officer was grateful for the Member feedback, which he would be incorporating into the induction programme. He also would welcome more suggestions from Members if they wanted to get in touch with him directly.

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Bicknell and Seconded by Councillor Gregory.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That Officers be authorised to develop the draft Member Induction Programme 2023 and ensure that the programme is funded during the budget making process.

98. WORK PROGRAMME

Upon invitation of the Chair, the Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the Work Programme, which was noted by the Committee.

99. REGISTER OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS

Councillor P. English re-declared his Prejudicial Interest in agenda items 11-13 and handed over to the Vice-Chair, Councillor Kelly, to Chair the remainder of the meeting. Councillor P. English then left the meeting.

Councillor Coster re-declared his Prejudicial Interest in agenda items 11-13 and left the meeting.

Upon invitation of the Chair, the Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report.

There were no questions from Members.

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Kelly and Seconded by Councillor Edwards.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Register of Complaints against Councillors and progress of any outstanding complaints be noted.

Standards Committee - 23.06.22

100. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the items.

101. REGISTER OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Kelly and Seconded by Councillor Edwards.

Following a discussion, the Committee

RESOLVED

That the Register of Complaints against Councillors be noted.

(The meeting concluded at 7.36 pm)