

STANDARDS

25 July 2019 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors English (Chairman), Coster, Mrs Daniells, Kelly and Tilbrook

Independent Persons Mr B Green and Mr J Thompson were also in attendance at this meeting.

[Note: Mr J Thompson left the meeting at Minute 128]

123. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bennett and Edwards.

124. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

125. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2019 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

126. START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the start time of meetings for the remainder of the municipal year be 6.00pm.

127. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS

The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) was established to advise the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in England. They act as an advisory public body sponsored by the Cabinet Office. They also monitor and report on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders.

The CSPL undertook to review the effectiveness of the arrangements for the conduct of elected councillors, introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Their review was undertaken over 2018 and they published a report including a series of recommendations in January 2019.

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The Committee was presented with a report from the Group Head of Council Advice and Monitoring Officer which considered the best practice recommendations made by the CSPL that had been directed to local authorities. Whilst the report highlighted the recommendations made to Government by the CSPL, it did not consider these in any detail as they would be the subject of later consideration and debate once any consultation or guidance was issued in response to the CSPLs report.

In presenting the report, the Group Head of Council Advice and Monitoring Officer drew Members' attention to Appendix 4 which highlighted those areas for discussion by the Committee. This confirmed that seven of the fifteen best practice recommendations were already practices within Arun's procedures. In considering any proposals for change, the Committee was also asked to confirm what consultation they wished to see happen before revised drafts of the Code of Conduct and Local Assessment Procedure were brought back to the Committee.

The other issue drawn to the Committee's attention was whether, in considering proposals for change from the CSPL's best practice recommendations, that the opportunity was taken to review the principles of Arun's Code of Conduct to reflect the revised definitions developed by the CSPL.

The Committee then turned to the areas for consideration in the best practice recommendations and the outcomes of their discussions are set out in Appendix 4, attached to the Minutes.

Having concluded its discussions, the Committee

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the areas for change in the Members' Code of Conduct and the Local Assessment Procedure be agreed, as set out in Appendix 4 attached to the minutes;
- (2) the review of the Code of Conduct should consider updating the "Principles of the Code of Conduct" against the latest wording for the Seven Principles of Public Life;
- (3) consultation be undertaken with Town & Parish Councils in considering any areas for change; and
- (4) the Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer should bring back a revised draft of the Members' Code of Conduct and Local Assessment Procedure to a future meeting, taking account of the areas for change.

128. ASSESSMENT PANEL DECISION

The Committee received a report from the Group Head of Council Advice and Monitoring Officer advising Members of the outcome of the Assessment Panel's

investigation into complaints made against Councillor Richard Bower, an Arun District Councillor.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the decisions of the Assessment Panel be noted.

129. 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 item of business on the grounds that it 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 item.

130. REGISTER OF ASSESSMENTS OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS (EXEMPT - PARAGRAPH 1 - INFORMATION RELATING TO ANY INDIVIDUAL)

The Committee received a report from the Group Head of Council Advice and Monitoring Officer which updated Members on the complaints made against Councillors received over the past two years.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the proposal for a public register of complaints to be introduced which could be published via the Committee to the Council's website.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to defer a decision regarding publication of the complaints register. The Monitoring Officer agreed to carry out further research to inform the Committee and to report back at the next meeting.

The Committee then

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the Register of Complaints against Councillors be noted; and
- (2) any decision regarding the publication of a complaints register be deferred until the next meeting.

Subject to approval at the next Standards meeting

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(The meeting concluded at 7.08 pm)