

Standards Committee

Minutes



Date:	Tuesday, 10 March 2015
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members:	Councillor David Donaldson (Chairman) Councillor Brenda Ackers (Vice Chairman) Councillors David Chedd, Alan Clayton, Sue Fazackerley, Vivienne M Willder
Independent Persons:	Mr A Mozley and Mr R Ellwood
Officers:	Tracy Morrison and Katharine McDonnell

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

There were no declarations on this occasion.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 20 January 2015 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitution was reported under Council procedure rule 23(c):

Councillor Alan Clayton for Councillor Keith Beckett

4. Local Statistics – Issues Raised with the Monitoring Officer

Ms Tracy Morrison (Monitoring Officer) introduced the periodic report which covered the period from end of September 2014 to end of February 2015. She explained that she was responsible for making an initial assessment of complaints and deciding whether to investigate them. The Standards framework placed an emphasis on working with individuals to bring about mutually acceptable solutions, and ensuring that breaches did not re-occur. Where it appeared that there may have been a breach, the Monitoring Officer may refer a matter for investigation.

The report listed a number of allegations made since the previous meeting of the Standards Committee, both for Borough and Parish Councils. Ms Morrison advised, however, that whilst all Standards related concerns were communicated to the Committee, not all would become complaints.

It was RESOLVED:

To note the report.

5. Review of the Code of Conduct

Ms Tracy Morrison (Monitoring Officer), advised that following the decision of the Committee to form a working group to review the code of conduct, there had been two meetings of the group. The first a joint meeting with officers and councillors from Blackpool where key principles of the Code of Conduct refresh were discussed. The second meeting of the working group, was Fylde councillors and the Independent Persons to discuss a draft Code of Conduct which was presented based on the key principles previously agreed.

The conclusion of the joint working group meeting was to retain the general format of the current code, which would mean the retention of the general obligations on members, the mandatory disclosable pecuniary interests section and the interests aspect. The group also had a view that the obligation on members to continue to declare a gift or the offer of hospitality three years after the event, having already registered it in the public register, was onerous. The group fully supported transparency and took the view that the publically available register of gifts and hospitality was sufficient.

The working group recommended that the code should permit any dual and triple hatted members to fully participate in debates regarding Borough matters and the current restrictions should be removed.

The working group was also clear that the current code should not be watered down, but the layout should be revised and the language made clearer, to assist members in the use of the code.

After a discussion it was RESOLVED:

1. To recommend to Council that the revised Code of Conduct be incorporated into the new Constitution at its next meeting on 30 March 2015.

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