

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on 2nd October 2012 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 7.20pm

Present: Councillors Tessa Hurworth, Bridget Lewis-Carr, John Northcott and Charles Yarwood

Parish Council Representatives: Mr Roger Hammond and Mr Stuart McLachlan

Also present: Councillors Rosemary Dickson, Chris Hunt and Corinna Osborne-Patterson

5. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED: That Councillor Charles Yarwood be elected as Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the 2012/2013 Municipal Year.

6. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: That this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

7. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th June 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Brooke and Dave Howarth.

9. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10. Localism Act 2011 – The New Standards Framework

The Committee had before it a report which detailed the comments of the Scrutiny Committee on the new Code of Conduct and arrangements for dealing with standards allegations. The Chairman advised that, in light of that report and comments received that afternoon from the Conservative Group setting out a number of concerns and issues, more consideration should be given to the Code of Conduct and the arrangements for dealing with standards allegations.

The Monitoring Officer outlined the changes made to the standards regime as required by the Localism Act 2011. The Council had approved the new Code of Conduct and arrangements for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code with effect from 1st July 2012 as required by the Act. The Monitoring Officer acknowledged that, without any transitional provisions, the timescale and process for drafting and adopting the new Code and arrangements had been necessarily short. He advised that the new Code of Conduct was much simpler than the previous Code and that the very cumbersome and lengthy arrangements for dealing with allegations of a breach of the Code no longer applied. The new procedure had been shortened and simplified, but it was appreciated that Members may wish to suggest some changes to address their concerns.

In order to consider the concerns already raised by Members (at the Scrutiny Committee and through the Conservative Group) and to allow the other Groups and Parish Councillors to submit any issues, the Chairman proposed that a Working Group of the Standards Committee comprising three Members in a ratio of 1:1:1 and one Parish Councillor be established. The Committee concurred in this proposal and welcomed the opportunity to discuss the concerns and issues raised. The Working Group would report its findings back to this Committee, and any recommendations for proposed changes to the Code and/or the arrangements for dealing with standards allegations would need to be submitted to the Council for approval.

The Corporate Head of Service (with responsibility for Democratic Services) undertook to write to Group Leaders regarding the submission of comments to the Working Group and asked that the Parish Council members of the Standards Committee seek any comments from colleagues. The Parish Council members were also asked to nominate one of them to serve on the Working Group.

RESOLVED: That a Working Group of the Standards Committee comprising three Members in a ratio of 1:1:1, to be nominated by Group Leaders, and one Parish Councillor be established to review the Code of Conduct and arrangements for dealing with standards allegations.

11. Appointment of Complaints Sub-Committee Members

The Committee considered a report set out at page 25 of the agenda in relation to the appointment of Complaints Sub-Committee members.

RESOLVED: That authority be delegated to the Corporate Head of Service (with responsibility for Democratic Services) and/or the Monitoring Officer to appoint Members of the Complaints Sub-Committee.