

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Standards Committee Tuesday, 8 April 2014 The Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors P. Lloyd Jones (Chairman), M. Bradshaw, Cole, J. Lowe, McDermott, T. McInerney, Parker, Wainwright and Mr A. Luxton (Co-optee)

Apologies for Absence: Mrs Anita Morris (Co-optee)

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney and A. Scott

Also in attendance: Councillor Polhill (Leader, Halton Borough Council) and Mr D. Parr (Chief Executive, Halton Borough Council), Professor D. Norman and Mr R. Radley (Independent Persons)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE

Action

STC5 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2013, having been printed and circulated, were signed as a correct record.

In considering the minutes it was noted that all Parish Council Register of Interest Forms had been completed and returned to the Monitoring Officer.

STC6 ATTENDANCE BY THE LEADER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE TO DISCUSS STANDARDS ISSUES

At the invitation of the Committee, Councillor Rob Polhill, Leader of Halton Borough Council and David Parr, Chief Executive of Halton Borough Council attended the meeting to discuss their respective roles and responsibilities relating to leadership in public office with Members.

The following issues were discussed:-

- How the Standards Committee could usefully address the promotion and maintenance of high standards of ethical behaviour on behalf of the Council;

- The advisory role of the Committee on the Authorities' adopted Code of Conduct;
- The Member/Officer relationship;
- The distinction between the public role of an Elected Member and their entitlement to a private life;
- The Nolan Principles and the Council's adopted Code of Conduct; and
- Training for Elected Members and Parish Councils on matters pertaining to their respective Codes of Conduct and Standards issues.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Polhill and David Parr be thanked for their attendance.

STC7 STANDARDS UPDATE

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services /Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with an update on issues which had arisen in other parts of the country, which provided an insight into the kind of issues faced and the manner in which they had proceeded.

Details on recent cases were given from the following locations:-

- Teeside;
- Barnet;
- Wirral;
- London Borough of Ealing;
- Fenland (Cambridgeshire); and
- Gwynedd.

The Committee commented that they found these reports to be very useful and helpful in terms of Members' learning and development.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

STC8 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Committee considered:

- (1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Committee during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of

the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and

- (2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

STC9 VERBAL REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER ON A COMPLAINT

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer, reported the outcome of a complaint which he had recently received.

It was noted that, under the arrangements for considering complaints against an Elected Member, the Monitoring Officer had consulted Professor Norman, Independent Person appointed to deal with such business. Professor Norman and the Monitoring Officer had interviewed both parties and reached a decision not to proceed to a formal investigation. Both parties involved had been advised of the outcome.

The Committee wished to place on record their thanks to Professor Norman for his role in considering the matter.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

STC10 VOTE OF THANKS

The Committee wished to place on record their thanks to Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones, for his role as Chair of the Committee since 2012.

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Meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.