

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

14th November 2016

Present: Councillor Jo Hodges in the Chair

Councillors P. Denham, Mackay and Stanley

Also in Attendance:

Mrs P. Clayton, St. Peter's Parish Council
Mrs V.A. Barrall, Warndon Parish Council
Mr Raymond Needham JP, Co-opted Member

Officers: Tim O'Gara, Deputy Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer

Apologies: Councillor Lamb, Mrs D. Merriman, Warndon Parish Council and Mr P. Thorlby, St. Peter's Parish Council

12 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

13 Declarations of Interest

None.

14 Public Participation

None.

15 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2016

The Committee considered the Annual Review Letter of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for the period covering 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. The Monitoring officer presented the report and commented that, whilst the number of complaints and enquiries received by the LGO had risen to 14 from 12 the previous year, the number was still relatively small. The Council sought to address any issues identified by improving processes and the complaint remedies recommended by the LGO in respect of the two upheld cases were implemented. These cases had been reported to the Committee previously.

In the ensuing discussion, Committee Members highlighted effective use of feedback and lessons learnt to improve services and reduce the potential for similar or repeat complaints.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Annual Review Letter of the Local Government Ombudsman for the period covering 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

17 Reports of the Local Government Ombudsman

The Committee were advised that, to date for the year commencing 1st April 2016, there had been no reports or upheld decisions received or incidents of maladministration identified by the Ombudsman to report to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report.

18 Complaints Made Under the Members' Code of Conduct

The Committee were advised that, since the last meeting, 3 complaints had been received. Before making a decision on each case, the Monitoring Officer consulted one of the Independent Persons from the pool appointed to consider complaints. The Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person found as follows:

- Complaint 1 – no action taken
- Complaint 2 – no action taken
- Complaint 3 – complaint resolved informally.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report.

19 Registers of Members' and Officers' Gifts and Hospitality and Register of Interests

The Committee were given the opportunity to review the registers of Members' and Officers' gifts and hospitality and register of interests.

20 Any Other Business

The Chairman made reference to the recent training for Members on standards issues. Arising from the matters covered by the training, Members had raised two issues where she felt advice and guidance would be beneficial:

- Social Media – Guidance for Members on appropriate use of social media accounts, both as a Member and as a private individual.
- Use of Personal Email Addresses – Guidance on the use of personal email addresses for Council business.

In response, the Monitoring Officer suggested that there would be merit in looking at Social Media by way of a report to the next meeting. Guidance in relation to using email could be dealt with by way of a note in the Members' weekly information items.

Committee Members supported the Monitoring Officer's proposed way forward.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 7.25p.m.

Chairman at the meeting on
13th March 2017