



Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held in Committee Rooms, East Pallant House on Monday 6 November 2023 at 2.00 pm

Members present: Ms M Corfield (Chair), Mr S Boulcott, Mr R Briscoe, Mx R Chant and Mr C Todhunter

Parish representatives present:

Independent Members present: Mr Andrews and Mr Thompson

Not present: Mr J Cross and Mr J Vivian

Officers present all items: Mrs L Baines (Democratic Services Manager) and Mr N Bennett (Divisional Manager for Democratic Services)

9 **Chair's Announcements**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Cross.

Cllr Corfield explained that Item 6 would be taken before Item 5. Cllr Corfield added that if the salmon appendix were to be discussed then the meeting could go into Part II.

10 **Approval of Minutes**

Cllr Corfield invited comments.

Cllr Briscoe explained that he was not present so would not vote.

Mr Andrews wished the minutes to clarify that he was present as his name had not been listed.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2023 subject to the above amendment be approved as a correct record.

11 **Declarations of Interests**

Cllr Chant declared a prejudicial interest in relation to knowing one of the nominees for agenda item 6.

Cllr Corfield declared a personal interest as a member of Chichester City Council.

Mr Bennett explained that councillors did not need to declare a personal interest as a member of a Parish Council unless it directly related to a Sub-Committee case or specific item.

12 **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

13 **Standards Arrangements**

Cllr Corfield introduced the item.

Cllr Todhunter asked in relation to page 5, number 5 what the alternatives considered should have been. Mr Bennett explained that the alternatives are that the Code of Conduct is not reviewed however it had been circa 13 years since the last review.

Cllr Briscoe requested for clarification with reference to page 10, second sentence the word 'she'. Cllr Briscoe also asked with reference to page 14 whether the councillor is named at that point. Cllr Briscoe then asked with reference to section 8.7 why the Monitoring Officer does not have the power to suspend councillors. Mr Bennett explained that reference to he/she should be viewed to cover all gender recognition. With regard to the ability to suspend councillors he explained that is a central government decision and there is no legislative powers to allow for that.

Mr Thompson explained that the Independent Person is available to the member that is the subject of Sub-Committee too.

Mr Bennett explained that the Independent Persons could be invited in an advisory capacity. He also suggested that a Parish representative could also be invited.

Cllr Briscoe asked whether Appendix 2 is part of the review of the Task and Finish Group. Mr Bennett confirmed that the whole document would be subject to the review.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Committee set up a task and finish group to review the Arrangements for Code of Conduct investigations. The membership being Cllr Corfield, Cllr Briscoe and Cllr Todhunter.**
- 2. That the Committee agree terms of reference for that task and finish group as set out at Appendix 2 of this report.**
- 3. That the Committee agree that the Independent Persons and a Parish Representative should also be invited to attend the Task and Finish Group.**

Note – immediately after the meeting Cllr Todhunter and Cllr Vivian agreed between them that Cllr Vivian should substitute for Cllr Todhunter on the task and finish group. There being no constitutional requirements relating to such changes to task and finish groups this was discussed and settled with the Monitoring Officer and Cllr Todhunter agreed to report this change to the next meeting of this Committee.

14 **Parish Representatives**

Mr Bennett reminded members that the Constitution requires the Standards Committee to have three Parish Councillors as part of the Committee. Due to the unique workload of the Committee and its work on the conduct of councillors in the district. Where matters refer to Parish Councillors Sub-Committee's would include a Parish Member who have first hand knowledge of those matters.

Mr Bennett had sent out an email to all parishes requesting volunteers for the role through the Parish Clerks. The applications were of extremely high standard. Mr Bennett clarified that the salmon appendix outlines two of those people. He also clarified that Mr Galego had explained that he is willing to continue.

Mr Bennett requested that Cllr McHail and Cllr Hitchcock be appointed to the role of Parish Representatives on the Standards Committee. He added that Cllr Galego had also confirmed that he would be happy to continue his role.

The Committee took the first vote for Cllr McHail to which Cllr Chant declared a prejudicial interest and abstained as he explained that he knew the candidate. The appointment was carried.

The Committee then took the second vote for Cllr Hitchcock. The appointment was carried.

The Committee also noted that Cllr Galego will remain in post for the time being until both applicants for the third position have completed the applications process and have been discussed and a choice made. This will be resolved at the next Standards Committee.

Cllr Galego was invited to introduce himself to the Committee. Cllr Corfield thanked Cllr Galego for his attendance.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee approve the Parish Councillors Cllr McHail and Cllr Hitchcock to the role of Parish Representative of this Committee.
2. That Cllr Gaelgo remain in post for the time being.

15 **Unreasonable Complainants Policy**

Mr Bennett introduced the report. He stressed the importance of the document given the impact of unreasonable complainants in staff.

Cllr Briscoe wished to thank officers for their tolerance of persistent complainants. He welcomed the Policy.

Cllr Todhunter wished to endorse Cllr Briscoe's comments. He explained it had been required at parish level so welcomed it at district level. With regard to page 35, fifth paragraph should read 'though' not 'thought'.

Cllr Boulcott asked for clarification on an acceptable level of emails and calls. Mr Bennett explained that senior officer involvement helps to define that. He added that certain situations would warrant more correspondence than others. He drew attention to page 31 and the work that had already been undertaken in order to work well with customers.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL

That the Committee recommend the policy appended to this report to Full Council.

16 Late Items

There were no late items.

17 Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no requirement to exclude the press and the public.

The meeting ended at 2.57 pm

CHAIRMAN

Date: