

Minutes

Standards Committee
Monday, 11 March 2019
Meeting held at Committee Room 9 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge



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Come into effect on: Immediately

Members Present:

Councillors Denys (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Councillors Duncan and Flynn

Officers Present: Lloyd White

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from the Chairman, Councillor Riley. The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Denys took the Chair.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 5 March and 10 May 2018 be approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CONFIRMATION THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II, IN PRIVATE

It was confirmed that all items marked as Part I would be considered in public.

5. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

Members were reminded of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 which required the Council to have in place arrangements under which, firstly, complaints against Members / Co-opted members could be investigated and, secondly decisions on complaints could be made. As a part of that process, the Act had envisaged a new role for an 'Independent Person'. Although not a member of the Standards Committee, the Independent Person's views were to be sought and taken into account by the Committee when considering complaints about the conduct of a Member or co-opted member of the authority.

Members were reminded that Mr David Smith had twice been appointed to the role and was willing to continue for a third 'term' until July 2022. The Committee were happy to recommend the further appointment of Mr Smith but felt that after this term had concluded in 2022, the position should be re-advertised.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to extend the period of appointment of Mr David Smith as Independent Person for a further three years to June 2022 and that, thereafter the position be re-advertised.

6. STANDARDS AND ETHICS INDICATORS

The Committee gave consideration to the annual report detailing a range of standards and ethics indicators for the authority for the previous 12 months.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS - A REVIEW BY THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

Members noted the following key recommendations of a report issued on 19 January 2019 by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) relating to ethical standards in local government:

- a new power for local authorities to suspend councillors without allowances for up to six months
- revised rules on declaring interests, gifts and hospitality
- local authorities to retain ownership of their own Codes of Conduct
- a right of appeal for suspended councillors to the Local Government Ombudsman
- a strengthened role for the Independent Person
- greater transparency about the number and nature of complaints regarding alleged breached of the Code of Conduct.

Although it was recognised that many of the recommendations contained in the report would require legislation to bring into effect, there were also a series of recommended 'best practices' which could be implemented immediately if required. The Committee asked the Monitoring Officer to review the list of best practices and suggest changes to the Council's current procedures, if required.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Monitoring Officer be asked to review the list of best practices contained within the report and suggest changes to the Council's current procedures, if required.