

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Gaywood (Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Mrs. Morris and Lindsay

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Mrs. Bracken and Brown

1. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Standards Board held on 24 January 2013, be approved and signed as a correct record.

2. Declarations of interest

No additional declarations were made.

3. Monitoring Officer's Annual Report

The Chief Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer presented her ninth Annual report, which provided an overview of her work; the work of the Standards Committee; and other governance arrangements monitored by other committees within the Council. Providing Members and the public with valuable information which should promote Member and Public confidence in the high ethical standards set by the Council. Of particular note was that a review of the new governance arrangements was being undertaken by the Governance Committee; that there had been no unlawfulness or maladministration over the last twelve months, and the last nine years; there had been an inspection by the Chief Surveillance Commissioner in relation to the Council's covert operations and the inspection had gone well; and the new Standards regime had been working well with only three complaints this year.

Resolved: That the Monitoring Officer's Annual report be noted.

The Committee gave a vote of thanks to the Monitoring Officer for all her work.

4. Openness and Transparency on Personal Interests

The Chief Legal and Governance Officer presented a report which advised that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had published revised guidance on personal interests with respect to membership of trade unions which required a slight amendment to the Council's Code of Conduct. Also attached for information was additional guidance that had been published in relation to openness and transparency on personal interests, which confirmed that the DCLG's view was that a dispensation was not required to take part in the business of setting council tax or a precept, simply by virtue of being a homeowner or tenant within the Authority's area. The

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Committee noted this clarification as this had been a matter under discussion at the last meeting.

A query was raised over the anomaly that might occur if the NALC Code had been adopted by a Parish/Town Council.

*Action 1: That an email be circulated to give Members an opportunity to update their disclosable pecuniary interest forms.*

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- a) the DCLG amendment underlined in red and highlighted in the Illustrative Text, as set out in Appendix A of the report be incorporated into the Sevenoaks District Council's Code of Conduct; and
- b) the amended Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) "guide for councillors" set out at Appendix B of the report regarding "Openness and transparency on personal interests", be noted.

### 5. Review of arrangements for the Standards Regime

The Chief Legal and Governance Officer presented a report which reviewed the procedures put in place in July 2012 in the light of the complaints received in 2012. Some Initial Intake Criteria had been strengthened to improve the process of receiving and considering such complaints and the system seemed to be working extremely well with a dramatic reduction in complaints this year. In response to a question the Chief Legal and Governance Officer confirmed that there was no right of appeal, but if the complaint was on procedure there would be recourse to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.33 PM

CHAIRMAN