

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 17 July 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Suresh Patel (Chair); Councillor Brian Oldham (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Andrew Kilbride, Les Marriott, Zoe Smith and Alan Bottwood

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brian Markham and Councillor Cathrine Russell.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of 20 March 2017 as a true and accurate record.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

6. RECRUITMENT OF PARISH COUNCILLOR(S) AND INDEPENDENT MEMBER(S) CO OPTES TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Standards Committee was apprised of the applications and recent interviews that had taken place for the vacancies of co-optees to the Committee – Independent Members and Parish Councillors.

The Chair advised that four interviews had been held, three for the roles of Independent Member Co-Optees and one for the vacancy of Parish Councillor Co Optee. The Standards Working Group had felt that just one of the applicants (Applicant A) met the criteria for the role of Independent Member Co Optee; it did not recommend the other applicants for the vacancies. It was suggested that Applicant A is offered the role of Independent Member Co-Optee to the Standards Committee.

The Standards Committee suggested that it would ask the successful applicant, should she accept the role of independent member co optee; to come to the next meeting of full Council and be introduced to all Councillors.

The Standards Working Group agreed also that it would ask the Standards Committee if it could re-advertise for the roles and include further advertising:

- Ask Parish Clerks to add the vacancies of two Parish Councillor Co-Optees to the agenda of the Parish Council
- Advertise the vacancy of Independent Member Co Optee amongst the Council's Community Forums

Resolved: That:

- (1) Applicant A is offered the role of Independent Member Co-Optee to the Standards Committee
- (2) Applicant A, should she accept the role of independent member co optee; is invited to come to the next meeting of full Council and be introduced to all Councillors
- (3) The vacancies of Parish Councillor Co-Optees and Independent Member Co Optee are re-advertised

7. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY - DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

The draft Gifts and Hospitality – Guidance for Councillors was presented to the Committee for approval.

The Standards Working Group (Work Plan) had considered the draft document at its recent meeting. Currently the Register of Gifts and Hospitality by Councillors form states that this form relates to gifts/hospitalities in excess of £25. The Standards Working Group agreed that this form should be updated to relate to gifts/hospitalities in excess of £50; which would be consistent with the Code.

In response to a query about declaring smaller gifts under the value of £50 but cumulatively amounted to a figure more than £50; the Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer advised that Councillors should declare such gifts. The key issue was that Councillors declared gifts even less than £50 if accepting the gifts impacted on their roles as Councillors, it being important for there to be transparency.

Resolved: That:

- (1) The Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Councillors is approved.
- (2) The financial limit above which Councillors must declare the receipt of gifts and hospitalities is £50 which is consistent with the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

8. EMPLOYEE'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The Standards Committee considered an updated version of the Employees' Code of Conduct following a recommendation made by the Standards Working Group (Work Plan.) The draft document includes one additional amendment made by the Monitoring Officer after the Working Group had considered the draft Code, this took into account further consultation with Officers.

The main revisions in the document were drawn to the attention of the Committee.

The Standards Committee discussed the document, made comment, asked questions and heard:

- There will be publicity to all staff regarding the updated Employee's Code of Conduct
- It was noted that the Employees' Code of Conduct is different to the Members' Code of Conduct
- There is a suite of Policies on the Intranet that staff must comply with.
- It needs to be ensured that all staff are aware of the Policies

Resolved: That:

- (1) The updated draft Employees' Code of Conduct is approved;
- (2) Authority is delegated to the Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer to make any necessary minor amendments to the Employees' Code of Conduct prior to its publication to all staff; and
- (3) It is noted that MTUCM will be notified of the updated Employees' Code of Conduct.

9. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Standards Committee Work Plan for 2017 – 2018 was noted.

The Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer explained the Code of Conduct Arrangements to the Committee. This applies to both Borough and Parish Councillors.

It was suggested that statistics regarding the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements is presented to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) The Standards Work Plan for 2017 -2018 is noted.
- (2) Statistics regarding the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements is presented to the next meeting of the Standards Committee

The meeting concluded at 5:30 pm

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