

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Standards Committee** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 5 February 2016 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Williams (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Bell, M Dixon, B Graham, E Huntington, I Jewell, K Shaw (Vice-Chairman) and B Stephens

Co-opted Members:

Parish Councillors T Batson and R Harrison

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor June Clark and Councillor Grenville Holland

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clark and Holland.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Changes to the Constitution

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided details of proposed changes to the Constitution relating to standards matters (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the proposed amendments to the Constitution be approved.

5 Assessment of Code of Conduct Complaints

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update on the work being undertaken by officers to identify the

possible options for the future assessment of Code of Conduct Complaints (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Governance Solicitor informed the Committee that a full report would be brought in May 2016 but preliminary indications showed that assessment of complaints was carried out by legal officers.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

The Chairman of the meeting was of the opinion that the following item of business was of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration because of the need to update Members on the delivery of training.

6 Refresher Training

The Governance Solicitor informed the Committee that refresher training on the Code of Conduct had been delivered to Members of Ferryhill Town Council.

The training had been constructively received and was well attended by Members of the Town Council.

7 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

8 Update on the handling of Current Complaints

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update in respect of complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Governance Solicitor informed the Committee that the report contained greater detail of the decision made for each complaint and suggested that the Committee may want to review a sample of complaints files at future meetings. Councillor E Bell considered this to be a good suggestion as it would enable Members to see the complaint in full and also give an appreciation of the work involved in dealing with a Code of Conduct complaint.

Resolved:

That the report be noted and that a sample of complaints files be brought to future meetings.