

STANDARDS AND CONDUCT COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 5TH APRIL, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor E Nash in the Chair

Councillors B Gettings, J Harper,
P Harrand and B Selby

30 Appeals against refusal of inspection of documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents in accordance with Procedure Rule 19 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

31 Exempt Information - Possible exclusion of the press and public

There were no resolutions to exclude the press and public.

32 Late items

There were no late items submitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.

33 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

34 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Colin Campbell and Councillor Kamila Maqsood.

35 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 11th January 2013 were approved as a correct record.

36 Councillors acting for developers - Recent national press coverage

The City Solicitor submitted a report drawing the Committee's attention to recent national publicity regarding the alleged practice of Councillors acting for developers for a fee. The Committee received assurances that no such allegations had been made against Leeds City Councillors, and that no Leeds City Councillors currently provide planning consultancy services within the Leeds City Council area according to their register of interests.

Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee discussed what action, if any, could be taken against former Councillors who used knowledge they had

gained whilst they were a Member as part of a consultancy service. The City Solicitor advised that, depending upon the circumstances, a former Councillor may well remain obligated not to disclose any confidential information they received in their capacity as a Councillor under civil law, and if they broke a duty of confidence, the Council may be able to take legal action against them.

RESOLVED - Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee resolved to note the report, and to request that officers remind Members of their on-going duty of confidence as part of the training provided to Members.

37 Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer

The City Solicitor (and Monitoring Officer) submitted a report regarding whether the arrangements set out in the Monitoring Officer Protocol have been complied with, and including any proposals for amendment to the Protocol itself. The City Solicitor assured the Committee that she had complied with her legal duties through the year, and had no issues to report.

Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee asked whether budgetary savings had been made as a result of the reduction in the number of complaints made against Leeds City Councillors and Parish and Town Councillors in the Leeds area. The Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified that the budget previously allocated for external standards investigations has now been removed.

Members also discussed the issue of dispensations and whether dual-hatted Members of certain authorities need to declare a disclosable pecuniary interest in meetings. The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified that according to the latest correspondence received from Mr Brandon Lewis MP, Members would need to declare positions in other authorities in relation to which they receive a taxable income and that discussions were on-going with the other West Yorkshire Authorities to ensure that consistent advice was being provided. In the meantime the Monitoring Officer suggested that the safest course of action would be for Members to both register offices from which they received payment that is taxable, and also to seek a dispensation to enable participation in matters relating to those interests.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee noted the assurances and performance information provided in the report, and approved the proposed amendments to the Monitoring Officer Protocol.

38 Annual Report of the Standards and Conduct Committee

The City Solicitor presented an annual report of the Standards and Conduct Committee for approval and referral to full Council.

Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee commented that aspects of the new standards regime had been addressed during the municipal year, particularly the implementation of the new Code of Conduct for Members

ahead of many other authorities and the introduction of a more proportionate complaints handling procedure. Members of the Committee asked to place on record their thanks to officers who had supported the transition to the new arrangements.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee noted the contents of the annual report and the intention to refer the report to full Council.