

## **STANDARDS AND CONDUCT COMMITTEE**

**FRIDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2012**

**PRESENT:** Councillor E Nash in the Chair

Councillors C Campbell, B Gettings and  
B Selby

### **10 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.

### **11 Exempt Information - Possible exclusion of the press and public**

There were no resolutions to exclude the press and public.

### **12 Late items**

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

### **13 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests.

### **14 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Janet Harper, Councillor Kamila Maqsood, and Councillor Peter Harrand.

### **15 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012 were approved as a correct record.

Members discussed that a quorum of four Members might be impractical for the Standards and Conduct Committee given that the overall size is only seven Members. Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee resolved to propose to General Purposes Committee that the quorum be reduced to three Members. Given that General Purposes Committee are to consider amended Council Procedure Rules at their October meeting, the Head of Governance Services undertook to raise this on the Committee's behalf at that meeting.

Members also considered the substitute arrangements for the committee and resolved that, subject to the agreement of a reduction in the quorum to three, there would be limited need to use substitute provisions moving forward.

## 16 Employee Code of Conduct

The Chief Officer, Human Resources submitted a report proposing amendments to the Employee Code of Conduct and the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations. The Head of Human Resources was in attendance to present the report and answer any questions from the Committee.

In relation to the Employee Code of Conduct, Members particularly discussed the following issues:

- That the Code of Conduct should contain more specific guidance on the issue of inappropriate use of the internet and electronic equipment belonging to the Council. Members agreed that a further bullet point could be added under the heading 'honesty and integrity' to address this issue, as well as incorporating a reference to any other Council policies which might be relevant.
- That the Code of Conduct should make clear to employees how they can use social media without it becoming a disciplinary issue. It was clarified that inappropriate comments made about Leeds City Council anywhere (regardless of the media used) are not acceptable.

In relation to the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations, Members commented that:

- In paragraph 4.10, the inclusion of the words "constructive and non-confrontational" mean that Members are unable to challenge officers or probe issues in an effective way during the scrutiny process. Members agreed that these words should be deleted, and the Protocol should make clear that "robust challenge" by Members is important during the scrutiny process.
- Members also commented that it was sometimes difficult for Members to conduct inquiries into issues or to challenge decisions when the officers were no longer available to attend the scrutiny meetings, for example, if they had retired or left the Council's employment. Members requested that officers look into whether officers could be compelled to take part in the scrutiny process through their contract of employment, or by other means.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee resolved to:

- (a) note the information contained in the report;
- (b) request that the Chief Officer, Human Resources considers the comments made before approving the revised Employee Code of Conduct;
- (c) request a further report and draft guidance on the appropriate use of resources by Members and employees; and

- (d) approve the revised Protocol for Member/Officer Relations for insertion into the Council's Constitution, subject to one further amendment in relation to the operation of Scrutiny Boards.

## **17 Implementation of new standards and conduct arrangements**

The City Solicitor submitted a report updating Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee on the progress made towards implementing the new standards regime in Leeds. Further to the Committee's request at the previous meeting, it was reported that there have been no formal complaints made against Leeds City Councillors or Parish and Town Councillors in Leeds to date.

At the meeting the Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that there had been an increase in the number of completed register entries received from Parish and Town Councillors since the report was submitted, and that now 86% were published on the Council's website. In relation to the three Parish Councils outstanding, all three Clerks had confirmed that their completed register of interests forms would be sent to Governance Services by the end of October.

Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee particularly discussed whether training could be provided to the Parish and Town Councillors in Leeds, especially regarding Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. Members agreed that the Parish and Town Councillors should be invited to attend the future training sessions held for Leeds City Councillors on the Code of Conduct at no cost, and that a further training session be offered to the Parish and Town Clerks. Members also asked officers to consider what other options were open for training the Parish and Town Councillors on the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee resolved to note the contents of the report.

## **18 Standards and Conduct Committee Work Programme**

The City Solicitor submitted a report presenting the Committee with a draft work programme for the remaining meetings of the municipal year.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Standards and Conduct Committee resolved to note the work programme<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the conclusion of the meeting Members agreed that assurance be sought from the Chief Planning officer on the arrangements in place for officers to declare or make known any beneficial interest in land or property where it is in the public interest to do so.