

# **Minutes of a meeting of the Mid Sussex District Council Standards Committee held on Tuesday 18 July 2017 from 6:00 p.m. to 6:52 p.m.**

**Present:** Cllr Pete Bradbury (Chairman)  
Town Cllr Christopher Ash-Edwards (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Liz Bennett	Cllr Heidi Brunsdon*	Cllr Anne Jones
Parish Cllr William Blunden	Parish Cllr Maria Fielding	Cllr Gordon Marples
Cllr John Belsey*	Parish Cllr Stephen Hand*	

\* Absent

**Also Present:** Anthony Cox and Dr David Horne, Independent Person on Standards Matters.

## **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor William Blunden nominated Councillor Pete Bradbury as Chairman of the Committee and seconded by Councillor Anne Jones. As there were no further nominees, Councillor Bradbury was duly elected.

### **RESOLVED**

Councillor Pete Bradbury be elected Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2017/18.

## **2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman nominated Town Councillor Christopher Ash-Edwards and this was seconded by Councillor Liz Bennett. There were no other nominees.

### **RESOLVED**

That Town Councillor Christopher Ash-Edwards be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2017/18.

## **3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor John Belsey, Councillor Stephen Hand and Councillor Heidi Brunsdon.

## **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **5. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 14 February were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **6. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

## **7. MID SUSSEX CODE OF CONDUCT AND ITS APPLICATION**

The Solicitor to the Council introduced the report, highlighting some minor typing amendments in the text of the Code of Conduct and confirming that the website had been amended to reflect these corrections. He highlighted that the Council has a rules based Code of Conduct, similar to West Sussex County Council, and many Town and Parish Councils. Some Town and Parish Councils do use a Code of Conduct based on the Nolan principles and if a complaint is received from these Councils, any considerations have to be based on their Code.

He confirmed that it is the role of the Standards Sub-Committee to consider complaints around the Code of Conduct, and not general complaints made when a person does not agree with a decision made.

In response to a Member's request for clarification on page 6, paragraph 7, he confirmed that an investigation cannot be carried out by anyone who is involved in the case. For prior investigations the Council has used an officer from West Sussex County Council, and an investigator formerly of The Standards Board for England.

A Member queried if there was any potential to influence the Town and Parish Councils to adopt a standard Code of Conduct so the same is used across the board. With reference to paragraph 13 and risk management implications, it was also noted that whilst reliance on a strong Chairman is a key factor in maintaining good conduct, it should also perhaps refer to a strong Clerk, for the Towns and Parishes, someone who is good at advising or strong in knowledge of the Nolan principles.

In response to a query by the Independent Person for Standards, it was confirmed that an Independent Person's role in a hearing would be earlier in the hearings process, to make comment on the report of a complaint. They would not be required at the time of the hearing.

Regarding the question of adopting a standard code across all Councils, the Solicitor confirmed the District Council can offer support, but cannot influence how other Councils run their business. MSALC do offer regular Code of Conduct training to Town and Parish Councils which is taken up to a varying degree. The Solicitor also provides an open invitation to attend their meetings to talk about the Code and he will be issuing a new invitation in the Autumn.

The Chairman drew Members attention to the recommendation of the report which includes noting the application of the code in various scenarios. The remainder of the meeting was taken up as a workshop for Members to discuss various real life examples of complaints and determine if a Code of Conduct breach had occurred.

The Chairman asked the Committee to consider at the end of the meeting, whether refresher training should also be provided to all Members, as the last training provided was in 2015. Both the recommendation in the report and this additional recommendation were unanimously agreed by Members.

### **RESOLVED**

That Members note the content of the adopted Code of Conduct and note its application in various scenarios, and that Code of Conduct training be provided to all Members in the near future.

**8. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10 DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN**

None.

Chairman