

**Minutes of a meeting of Standards Committee
held on Monday, 11th September, 2023
at 7.00 pm**

Present: M Cornish (Chairman)
C Wood (Vice-Chair)

M Kennedy C Phillips A Beecroft D Denham St
Pinnock

Absent: Councillors M Belsey and J Russell

Also Present: Paul Cummins, Independent Person on Standards Matters.

Dr David Horne, Independent Person on Standards Matters.

Ms Wendy Swinton-Eagle, Independent Person on Standards Matters.

1. RATIFICATION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN.

The ratification of the Chairman and Vice Chairman was agreed by general affirmation by the Committee.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillors M Belsey, Russell and Salembeni.

3. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.

None.

4. TO RECEIVE DECLARATION OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.

Councillor Denham St Pinnock declared a registerable interest, as he is Chairman of West Sussex Association of Local Councillors and Chairman of Mid Sussex Association of Local Councillors.

5. TO BE AGREED BY GENERAL AFFIRMATION THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 06 JUNE 2022 AND 24 MAY 2023.

Kevin Toogood, Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) confirmed the minutes of the meetings held on 06 June 2022 and 24 May 2023 were a correct record. The Committee agreed the minutes and they were signed by the Chairman.

6. PARISH NOMINATIONS.

Kevin Toogood, Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report. He advised the District Council is responsible for the standards regime for both the District Council and the Town and Parish Councils within the District. It is important to have Town and Parish Council input, when considering Member conduct, to act as a peer in the process.

The Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) reminded the nominated Town & Parish Committee Members to refrain from voting on their nomination as Councillors Beecroft and Denham St. Pinnock would not formally be Members of the Committee until after the vote had concluded.

There were no questions from Committee Members.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendation in the report, proposed by the Chairman and seconded by the Vice Chairman. The recommendation was agreed unanimously with 4 in favour.

RESOLVED

The Standards Committee ratified the appointment of the representatives proposed by the Parish Councils to the Standards Committee.

7. ANNUAL REPORT.

Kevin Toogood, Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report. He reiterated the importance of the Standards Committee upholding the highest standard to Member conduct in the District. This includes assisting Members in observing the Code of Conduct and investigating Member conduct when a complaint has sufficient substance to justify consideration by the Standards Committee.

The Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) advised the Committee the report had been brought forward in the Councils Committee Schedule 2023/24, to enable the newly formed Standards Committee to convene and engage in significant discussions.

The Chairman asked Members if there were any questions.

Dr Horne, Independent Person on Standards Matters asked for clarity on the provision of training specifically for Members of the Standards Committee who would have investigate particular complaints and for all Councillors in general. Noting the low level of complaints could be due to a lack of awareness of the process.

The Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that general Standards training for District Councillors had been provided at the start of this electoral cycle, which included Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest. He advised it would be worthwhile Members of the Standards Committee having specific training and welcomed a debate on this from Members. Mid Sussex District Council do not offer specific training to Town & Parish Councillors, however, if there was a requirement this would be considered.

A Member advised that West Sussex Association of Local Councillors offer training and encourage Members to participate. He noted if there was a need for Standards training this could be arranged on request.

A Member reminded Members, that it was important for Town and Parish Councils to keep escalating complaints up to Mid Sussex District Council so that issues get dealt with effectively.

The Chairman thanked Members for their comment and welcomed the opportunity for further training.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendation in the report, proposed by the Chairman and seconded by the Vice Chairman. The recommendation was agreed unanimously, with 6 in favour.

RESOLVED

The Standards Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

8. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2 DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN.

No questions were received.

The meeting finished at 7.13 pm

Chairman