

**Minutes of a meeting of Standards Committee  
held on Monday, 9th March, 2020  
from 6.00 pm - 6.18 pm**

**Present:** P Bradbury (Chairman)  
C Ash-Edwards (Vice-Chair)

A Bennett  
L Bennett  
H Brunsdon

R Clarke  
D Denham St Pinnock  
K Healy

B Von Thunderclap

**Absent:** Councillor A Eves

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

Councillor N Webster.

**1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Eves.

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

None.

**3. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2019**

The Chairman requested that there be further elaboration on P.4, Paragraph 2 when it referred to the County Policy. He felt that the word policy be replaced by the name of the policy – the Code of Conduct.

A Member also noted that the recommendation on P.6, Paragraph 26 omitted the word 'the' before the word 'amended'.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 October 2019 were amended and then approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

None.

**5. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

The Chairman introduced the draft annual Standards Committee report which is due for consideration by Council at its meeting on 1st April 2020.

Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services, presented the report which noted a reduction in overall complaints from the previous year. He highlighted that Parish Councils have recently preferred to deal with complaints themselves and are usually on the topic of Planning. He also highlighted that two complaints were received against District Councillors; both complaints were dealt with by the Standards Panel and only the second complaint required action.

A Member enquired whether the report term cover the calendar year 2019 or the municipal year 2019/20.

The Head of Regulatory Services confirmed that it was for the calendar year 2019.

For the benefit of the Member, the Chairman explained the responsibilities of the Standards Committee and the Standards Panel as well as the process for dealing with standards complaints.

The Head of Regulatory Services noted that Committee for Standards in Public Life have put forward a new Code of Conduct which is believed to be adopted by the Government in June. If the County Council chose to adopt it then all District Councils in West Sussex will be required to adopt it.

One of the Independent Persons on Standards Matters noted that he was the Independent Person who was consulted and provided advice during the second complaint against the District Councillor. He felt glad that the report captures the volume of complaints and to see the forward outlook. He expressed concerns over the misuse of social media and hoped that the national issue is grasped soon. He believed that intimidation over social media, not only to councillors but all those in public positions was indeed the most serious concern. He finally highlighted a typographical error on the first line of P.8 where 'hearings' is missing a capital letter and should instead read 'Hearings'.

The other Independent Person on Standards Matters echoed his colleague's comments and his foresight for the challenges that social media will pose going forward. He believed that materials and awareness of the challenges should be made more available so that Councillors feel they have some back-up when they experience troubles.

The Committee thanked both the Independent Members of Standards for their work and their diligence the past four years.

The Chairman informed the Committee that they will be making their representations as to their choice for the new Independent Persons on Standards Matters at Council on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

A Member sought clarification on whether Members can ask for details regarding particular complaints.

The Head of Regulatory Services replied that Members cannot.

A Member expressed the need to look forward to identify problems that may arise.

A Member noted on P.8, Paragraph 2 that it states that the Member brought 'his' office into disrepute whereas the above paragraph does not refer to the gender of the Member concerned. They suggested that 'his' be changed to 'their' so as to not identify the Member concerned.

The Chairman noted that Cllr Denham St Pinnock's full name is not correctly on P.7, Paragraph 4.

The Head of Regulatory Services confirmed that those changes will be made.

**RESOLVED**

The Committee made the following changes ahead of the report being submitted to Council:

1. That the typographical errors be amended.
2. That the 'his' in Paragraph 2, P.8 be changed to 'their'.
3. That Cllr Douglas St Pinnock's name be correctly listed on Paragraph 4, P.7.

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

None.

The meeting finished at 6.18 pm

Chairman