

**Minutes of a meeting of the Mid Sussex District Council
Standards Committee held on Wednesday, 10th October 2012
from 7.00 pm to 7:29 pm.**

Present:-

Town Cllr Christopher Ash-
Edwards
Cllr Liz Bennett
Parish Cllr William Blunden

Cllr Jack Callaghan
Parish Cllr Duncan
Cunningham
Parish Cllr Jenny Forbes
Cllr Catrin Ingham

Cllr Andrew Lea*
Cllr Gordon Marples
Cllr Simon McMenemy

* Absent

Also present: Mr Gerard Irwin and Sir Roger Sands, Independent Persons on Standards Matters.

8. SUBSTITUTES

None.

9. APOLOGIES

None.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

11. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 17th July 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY ON PERSONAL INTERESTS – A GUIDE FOR COUNCILLORS

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report and said that three complaints had been received under the new system and generally there had been a smooth transition. Guidance had been issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government in August 2012 and this could be circulated to District, Town and Parish Councillors to assist further understanding of the new Standards regime.

Members said that the guidance was very helpful and would be beneficial for Town and Parish clerks should they receive a query. The guidance provided clarity on several areas and some Members said that there were Councillors who felt they understood the system but would benefit from the additional information.

Members felt that the guidance should be circulated as widely as possible so that all Members had the opportunity to read it.

One Member queried whether the requirement to disclose pecuniary interests should be widened to include immediate family members and the Monitoring Officer said that the legislation only goes so far as to include the Member and their spouse or partner. The Mid Sussex standards regime could be amended to include family members but a Member could not be prosecuted for failure to disclose those interests.

The Chairman moved that the guidance of August 2012 on openness and transparency on personal interests should be circulated by the Monitoring Officer to District Councillors and Parish and Town Clerks which was unanimously agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the guidance of August 2012 on openness and transparency on personal interests be circulated by the Monitoring Officer to District, Parish and Town Councillors.

13. GERARD IRWIN REPORT ON THE INDEPENDENT PERSONS MEETING HELD IN BASINGSTOKE ON 27TH SEPTEMBER 2012

Gerard Irwin, Independent Person for Standards Matters, gave a verbal report on the meeting he attended on 27th September with other Independent Persons for Standards from across the region. Notes of the meeting would be sent to the Monitoring Officer who could circulate further if necessary.

Some of those in attendance raised concern about the legal liability of independent persons and what should be expected of them. The Monitoring Officer said that it would be hard for independent persons to be held liable given that they were not decision makers. They would be covered by the Council's general insurance policies whilst carrying out business they have been assigned by the local authority. It was suggested that independent persons should take care to ensure consent was obtained before sharing confidential information.

The Chairman thanked Mr Irwin for his report.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the verbal report.

Chairman