

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

16 February 2016

MONITORING OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS BY INDEPENDENT PERSONS
AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES - RESULTS

REPORT OF CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Contact Officers: Stephen Whetnall/David Blakemore Tel No: 01962 848220/848217

RECENT REFERENCES:

ST103 – Monitoring of Committee Proceedings by Independent Persons & Parish Representatives – Results – 10 February 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This process was introduced in 2002 and previously has been repeated every two years. Meetings of Council, Cabinet, The Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Planning Development Control Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee have been monitored in the past, being those that generate the highest levels of public interest.

As a reminder, the monitoring process involved the Independent Persons and Parish Representatives (in various combinations) attending selected meetings as members of the public. They were not 'mystery shoppers', as this Committee decided that everyone at the meeting to be monitored should be aware of their attendance and their role, which was to observe proceedings from the public viewpoint and make comments regarding the compliance by Members with the Code of Conduct and other protocols. The exercise also provided a useful opportunity for comment on a number of general 'housekeeping' issues, such as meeting facilities, signage and acoustics.

This year, Cabinet, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Planning Committee and Winchester Town Forum were monitored and there were some useful comments made.

The questionnaires completed by the observers have been reproduced in full and are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the Independent Persons and Parish Representatives be thanked for undertaking the monitoring of committee meetings, to ascertain the level of compliance with the Code of Conduct and other guidance.
- 2 That the Committee considers the comments made and decides whether any actions are necessary, beyond those referred to in the report.
- 3 That the content of this report and any additional comments from the Committee be drawn to the attention of all Group Leaders, chairmen and the relevant officers.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

16 February 2016

MONITORING OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS BY INDEPENDENT PERSONS AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT OF CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In summary, the comments of the observers revealed no areas of concern with regard to probity and ethics and there were some positive observations in the way meetings were handled. Overall, this is a pleasing outcome.
- 1.2 There were a few issues related to the general management and administration of meetings which are discussed below. However, the completed questionnaires have been attached in their entirety, as members of the Standards Committee will wish to see all the comments and may want to raise other points.

2 Guildhall Issues

- 2.1 A number of issues were raised, as summarised below:
 - a) Font of signs within the Guildhall (showing events, meetings etc.) were small making it quite difficult to read. In addition, the electronic information board on reception had "rolling content" so attendees might miss specific meeting detail;
 - b) No signs for disabled access were apparent;
 - c) Guildhall reception was unmanned for evening meetings and some concerns about open and unchecked access to the building at other times;
 - d) Some difficulties with microphones but these were generally resolved during meetings;
 - e) One person found the meeting room (Walton Suite) too warm.
 - f) Concerns about the requirements for the Guildhall lift to be serviced.
 - g) Requirement for notification from the Chairman regarding emergency exit procedures from the building.

- 2.2 The staffing of reception was raised at the previous review and in response, it was highlighted that the cost of additional staff would have to be met by the Council. Visitors requiring information are able to call the duty manager on the dedicated phone provided for this purpose on the reception desk. The duty manager carries a mobile phone linked to reception at all times. With regard to open and unchecked access to the building, Guildhall staff regularly “walk” the building as well as monitoring via cameras in key areas. However the concern of the fire exit at the back of the building being left propped open has been drawn to the attention of the Guildhall Manager. The comment raised about the electronic information board and signage in general will also be discussed.
- 2.3 The reminder about the need to inform members of the public regarding emergency evacuation procedures is noted (the Guildhall provide a laminated procedure note which is left by the Chairman’s microphones).
- 2.4 Members of the public etc making deputations to the Planning Committee are informed in advance as to which room the meeting is to be held. However, it is recognised that clear directions and signage are necessary to locate this!
- 2.5 The problem with the lift was unfortunate and assurances have been given by the Estates team that the facility is regularly maintained, but in this instance there was a delay in receiving a necessary part required to ensure its continued safe use.

3 Winchester Town Forum – 18 November 2015

- 3.1 It was noted that the meeting was chaired well but commented that it was not clear whether decisions flowed from the Forum. The Town Forum is mainly an advisory body, although some recommendations are made to Cabinet on specific matters, including on the town area budget. Recommendations in Reports to the Forum should make this clear, as would normally the Chairman as part of their summing up. This will be followed up.

4 Cabinet – 2 December 2015

- 4.1 Both Standards Committee attendees commented that the opportunity for public participation had not been clearly announced at the start of the meeting.
- 4.2 This is a valid point but it should be noted that all members of the public and Councillors are greeted by the Democratic Services Officer prior to the start of the meeting and asked whether they wished to speak or observe. In addition, the Chairman announces that public participation is usually taken at the start of the relevant agenda item. At this particular Cabinet meeting, the situation might have been slightly confused by one Councillor being given the opportunity to address the meeting during the public participation period, at the Chairman’s discretion (and as there were no other members of the public wishing to speak on general matters).

- 4.3 The point regarding the lack of label for the Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is valid and will be addressed for future Cabinet meetings.
- 4.4 The paper referred to at item 18 (the Forward Plan) was available on request to the public (and copies were on the “spares” table for Councillor attendees). However, this can be clarified on the agenda, together with providing an on-line link to the Forward Plan on the Council’s website. Copies will also be made available in the public gallery.
- 4.5 The reminder for Councillors to remember to always switch on their microphones when addressing the meeting is noted. In addition, the potential confusion caused by referring to organisations by different names during discussion of the Silver Hill discussion is also noted, although most if not all of those in attendance had been present during many hours of previous discussions on this matter and were familiar with the terminology.
- 4.6 The point about the visibility of nameplates is a familiar one, but not something we can easily improve.

5 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7 December 2015

- 5.1 It was noted that it was helpful to have access to the agenda and Reports online prior to the meeting, as the complicated nature of some debate would have made the meeting difficult to follow otherwise.
- 5.2 The Chairman’s wish to allow all Councillors the opportunity to contribute was noted, as was the explanation provided of the requirement for the formal meeting procedure for motions.

6 Planning Committee – 10 December 2015

- 6.1 Comments that nameplates were sometimes unreadable due to the lack of available table space because of the other “clutter” on the tables is acknowledged as is a suggestion that name plates could be attached to microphone stems. There was also some suggestion that the nameplate include the Councillors Ward and/or political party.
- 6.2 With regard to the last suggestion, the Planning Committee is a regulatory body and Members make decisions representing the whole District, without regard to political party or Ward representation so this is not considered appropriate.
- 6.3 The feasibility of adapting the name plates to attach to the microphones and/or in some way be made more visible is unlikely to be practical.
- 6.4 The comment regarding the Chairman providing a brief outline of public participation procedure at both the morning and afternoon sessions is considered helpful. Regarding the ability to hear all public speakers, it is recognised that it can be an intimidating process to attend and speak at meetings. A suggestion might be to include a card with advice for speakers,

such as how to operate the microphone and to try and speak up; however, it is probably more practical for the Chairman to advise the public of this when they are welcomed and invited to the table.

- 6.5 The comments regarding the floor monitor obscuring the public's view of proceedings is acknowledged and the feasibility of improving this with existing furniture/equipment will be examined. Whilst the use of seating with swing mounted desk tops to assist attendees is noted, it would be for Members to decide if the additional resources required were warranted.
- 6.6 The suggestion that the Head of Development Management summarise any additional planning conditions etc required immediately prior to the Chairman's summary of debate is good practice and is normally carried out.
- 6.7 In general, the comments about the generally good standard of the meeting are welcomed.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

An Efficient and Effective Council.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None.

RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Completed Questionnaires

John Chapman attended Cabinet 2 December 2015



Winchester
City Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MONITORING MEETINGS

(Please circle the best description)

1. How clear was the signage at the Guildhall to indicate where and when the meeting would be held?

Excellent / Good / **Average** / Poor / Very Poor

Further Comments.....*Notice at main door was clear but font was quite small so it was as a small challenge to work out where to go.*

2. To what extent was it clear who the Councillors, the officers and (if appropriate) the applicants were?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

3. How good were the facilities in the meeting room? (eg seating and, if appropriate, monitors, projector screens etc)

Excellent / Good / **Average** / Poor / Very Poor

Further comments.....*Too hot!*

4. Were copies of the agenda available on the public seating?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*[None]*

5. To what extent did the agenda sheet clearly explain the process of public participation?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...*[None]*

6. How clearly was the opportunity for public participation announced at the beginning of the meeting?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / **Not at all**

Further comments.....*Can't remember it!*

7. Were you asked directly by the Committee Administrator or the Chairman if you wanted to speak during public participation?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*Greeted properly by the Chairman*

8. If there was public participation, how did the Chairman deal with it and to what extent were the questions/concerns answered fairly?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*Chair was polite & courteous and encouraging*

9. How well could both the public speakers and the Councillors be heard?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*Very good organisation, some could be clearer*

10. Councillors who are not members of the Committee can sometimes contribute to the debate, including Portfolio Holders, Ward Members and the Leader. If applicable, how well was this fact communicated to the public?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*It was apparent that this happened, but the Chair did not directly point it out. However, in my view it was not necessary.*

11. Following on from question 10 above, and specifically relating to the Planning Committee, to what extent was the Planning Protocol followed (eg: Members of the Committee not voting because of perception of bias/pre-determination or choosing to speak as a Ward Member to advocate a particular view)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*Not applicable!*

12. If any Councillors declared an interest, how well was it made clear what the actual interest was (i.e. Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, personal or personal & prejudicial and a brief mention of the circumstances)?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*Chair declared interest & referenced Standards Committee sign off.*

13. Did any Member leave the room after declaring an interest, perhaps after making a statement under Public Participation as permitted by the Code of Conduct?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*N/A*

14. When items were debated, how well did the Chairman achieve a fair and balanced discussion?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

15. How well did the Chairman summarise the debate prior to a decision being made?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

16. How clearly did you understand the actual decision reached by the meeting on each item?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

17. Did any other Code of Conduct issues arise?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*N/A*

18. Overall, to what extent was the debate and decision easy to follow for the lay person?

Completely / Quite well / **Partly** / Not at all

Further comments.....*Not easy to follow all Chairmans points.*

OTHER COMMENTS:

[None]

John Spokes attended The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 7 December



Winchester
City Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MONITORING MEETINGS

(Please circle the best description)

1. How clear was the signage at the Guildhall to indicate where and when the meeting would be held?

Excellent / Good / Average / Poor / Very Poor

Further Comments.....[None]

2. To what extent was it clear who the Councillors, the officers and (if appropriate) the applicants were?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

3. How good were the facilities in the meeting room? (eg seating and, if appropriate, monitors, projector screens etc)

Excellent / **Good** / Average / Poor / Very Poor

Further comments.....[None]

4. Were copies of the agenda available on the public seating?

Yes / No

Further comments.....[None]

5. To what extent did the agenda sheet clearly explain the process of public participation?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

6. How clearly was the opportunity for public participation announced at the beginning of the meeting?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

7. Were you asked directly by the Committee Administrator or the Chairman if you wanted to speak during public participation?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*The question was not directly asked as the administrator knew the reason for my being at the meeting.*

8. If there was public participation, how did the Chairman deal with it and to what extent were the questions/concerns answered fairly?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

9. How well could both the public speakers and the Councillors be heard?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

10. Councillors who are not members of the Committee can sometimes contribute to the debate, including Portfolio Holders, Ward Members and the Leader. If applicable, how well was this fact communicated to the public?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

11. Following on from question 10 above, and specifically relating to the Planning Committee, to what extent was the Planning Protocol followed (eg: Members of the Committee not voting because of perception of bias/pre-determination or choosing to speak as a Ward Member to advocate a particular view)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

12. If any Councillors declared an interest, how well was it made clear what the actual interest was (i.e. Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, personal or personal & prejudicial and a brief mention of the circumstances)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

13. Did any Member leave the room after declaring an interest, perhaps after making a statement under Public Participation as permitted by the Code of Conduct?

Yes / No

Further comments.....[None]

14. When items were debated, how well did the Chairman achieve a fair and balanced discussion?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

15. How well did the Chairman summarise the debate prior to a decision being made?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

16. How clearly did you understand the actual decision reached by the meeting on each item?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....[None]

17. Did any other Code of Conduct issues arise?

Yes / **No**

Further comments.....[None]

18. Overall, to what extent was the debate and decision easy to follow for the lay person?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...*The agenda clearly stated that reports listed were available on the Council's website. I had the advantage of reading the detailed reports in advance of the meeting. There was at least one set of reports on the public seating. Some detailed questions and debate would have been difficult to follow without prior reading of these reports. This is not a criticism it is a fact that this committee is concerned with detailed Cabinet decisions.*

OTHER COMMENTS:

Perception for the public Bystander;

1 – The Chairman appeared to be at great pains to enable full opportunity for the expression of views.

2 – An example of the need for formal requirements to be followed and being followed was well shown by the need for seconding as well as proposing a motion following officers advice.

Margaret Hill attended Winchester Town Forum 18 November



Winchester
City Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MONITORING MEETINGS

(Please circle the best description)

1. How clear was the signage at the Guildhall to indicate where and when the meeting would be held?

Excellent / **Good** / Average / Poor / Very Poor

Further Comments.....*Went initially to Wessex Business Forum in Bapsy Hall (my fault!); but this probably a reflection of my inability to hear properly! No one on reception at 5.55pm.*

2. To what extent was it clear who the Councillors, the officers and (if appropriate) the applicants were?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*Had to read all names but not a problem.*

3. How good were the facilities in the meeting room? (eg seating and, if appropriate, monitors, projector screens etc)

Excellent / Good / Average / Poor / Very Poor

Further comments.....*Sound level at back of hall rather low – noise of air-con fan. Resolved when microphone sound turned up.*

4. Were copies of the agenda available on the public seating?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*[None]*

5. To what extent did the agenda sheet clearly explain the process of public participation?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

6. How clearly was the opportunity for public participation announced at the beginning of the meeting?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

7. Were you asked directly by the Committee Administrator or the Chairman if you wanted to speak during public participation?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*N/A*

8. If there was public participation, how did the Chairman deal with it and to what extent were the questions/concerns answered fairly?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

9. How well could both the public speakers and the Councillors be heard?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*Once sound turned up. Further sound problem with member of public who dispensed with mike and spoke loudly instead.*

10. Councillors who are not members of the Committee can sometimes contribute to the debate, including Portfolio Holders, Ward Members and the Leader. If applicable, how well was this fact communicated to the public?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*Not sure – does this apply to Town Forum?*

11. Following on from question 10 above, and specifically relating to the Planning Committee, to what extent was the Planning Protocol followed (eg: Members of the Committee not voting because of perception of bias/pre-determination or choosing to speak as a Ward Member to advocate a particular view)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

12. If any Councillors declared an interest, how well was it made clear what the actual interest was (i.e. Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, personal or personal & prejudicial and a brief mention of the circumstances)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

13. Did any Member leave the room after declaring an interest, perhaps after making a statement under Public Participation as permitted by the Code of Conduct?

Yes / **No**

Further comments.....*[None]*

14. When items were debated, how well did the Chairman achieve a fair and balanced discussion?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

15. How well did the Chairman summarise the debate prior to a decision being made?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....A good Chair; but do decisions flow from the Forum?

16. How clearly did you understand the actual decision reached by the meeting on each item?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

17. Did any other Code of Conduct issues arise?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*One member asked if being employed by Tesco constituted a personal interest, but was told it did not.*

18. Overall, to what extent was the debate and decision easy to follow for the lay person?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

OTHER COMMENTS:

[None]

Richard Lindley attended Cabinet 2 December 2015



Winchester
City Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MONITORING MEETINGS

(Please circle the best description)

1. How clear was the signage at the Guildhall to indicate where and when the meeting would be held?

Excellent / **Good** / Average / Poor / Very Poor

Further Comments...*I did not see signs for disabled access.*

2. To what extent was it clear who the Councillors, the officers and (if appropriate) the applicants were?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...*But some sub-titles on desk labels too small to be read from public area (officers functions not shown in papers)*

3. How good were the facilities in the meeting room? (eg seating and, if appropriate, monitors, projector screens etc)

Excellent / Good / Average / Poor / Very Poor

Further comments...*[None]*

4. Were copies of the agenda available on the public seating?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*Except – see note at end.*

5. To what extent did the agenda sheet clearly explain the process of public participation?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

6. How clearly was the opportunity for public participation announced at the beginning of the meeting?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / **Not at all**

Further comments.....*As far as I remember!*

7. Were you asked directly by the Committee Administrator or the Chairman if you wanted to speak during public participation?

Yes / No

Further comments.....*On arrival by clerk; then by chair (in relation to Standards Committee).*

8. If there was public participation, how did the Chairman deal with it and to what extent were the questions/concerns answered fairly?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

9. How well could both the public speakers and the Councillors be heard?

~~Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all~~ **Mostly**

Further comments.....*Good, except see note at end.*

10. Councillors who are not members of the Committee can sometimes contribute to the debate, including Portfolio Holders, Ward Members and the Leader. If applicable, how well was this fact communicated to the public?

Completely / Quite well / **Partly** / Not at all

Further comments.....*Not fully communicated.*

11. Following on from question 10 above, and specifically relating to the Planning Committee, to what extent was the Planning Protocol followed (eg: Members of the Committee not voting because of perception of bias/pre-determination or choosing to speak as a Ward Member to advocate a particular view)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*N/A*

12. If any Councillors declared an interest, how well was it made clear what the actual interest was (i.e. Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, personal or personal & prejudicial and a brief mention of the circumstances)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

13. Did any Member leave the room after declaring an interest, perhaps after making a statement under Public Participation as permitted by the Code of Conduct?

Yes / **No**

Further comments...*[None]*

14. When items were debated, how well did the Chairman achieve a fair and balanced discussion?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....But there was no discussion

15. How well did the Chairman summarise the debate prior to a decision being made?

Completely / Quite well / **Partly** / Not at all

Further comments.....But there was no greater need.

16. How clearly did you understand the actual decision reached by the meeting on each item?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....*[None]*

17. Did any other Code of Conduct issues arise?

Yes / **No**

Further comments.....*[None]*

18. Overall, to what extent was the debate and decision easy to follow for the lay person?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments.....But Members occasionally not clearly heard. Perhaps Chairs could try and recognise when contributions might not be audible.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Item 10: Chair referred permanently to 'Hendersons' which does not appear in report. Relationship to 'SW1' not explained.

Item 18: Papers didn't seem to be available to public.

It was not clear who the gentleman was, sitting at a table, who proved to be Chair of internal scrutiny committee – label needed.



Winchester
City Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MONITORING MEETINGS

(Please circle the best description)

Introduction

In circumstances where Jess Bond & I were tasked to represent a cross-section of the general public unfamiliar with such formal civic proceedings, the following comments & observations are forwarded with regards to our monitoring of the Planning Committee Meeting of Winchester City Council on Thursday 10th December 2015.

Prior to the meeting and since, I made several visits to the WCC web pages and I am of the opinion that the meeting's agenda & aims appeared to reflect both the appropriate protocols defined in the Constitution of the City Council and the planning principles of the long term strategic plan for development within the Winchester District.

1. How clear was the signage at the Guildhall to indicate where and when the meeting would be held?

Excellent / **Good** / Average / Poor / Very Poor

Further comments..... **However there was a risk that although details of the Planning Meeting appeared momentarily on the electronic information board sited in the foyer entrance, it was frequently displaced by other corporate & commercial announcements, to the extent that attendees transiting the lobby could/would remain uninformed.**

2. To what extent was it clear who the Councillors, the officers and (if appropriate) the applicants were?

Completely / Quite clear / **Partly** / Not at all

Further comments...**Notwithstanding the necessity for councillors/officers to utilise all available table space for documents/cups/plates/iPad etc., the "clutter" resulted in a number of Councillor's name boards being unreadable from the public seating area.**

Recommendation:.....**Could consideration be given to attaching Councillor's name boards to the stem of the individual's microphone in a manner that would be continually visible to the public/press and would it enhance the attendee's**

understanding of the meeting, if the board also contained the Councillor's constituency and political grouping?

3. How good were the facilities in the meeting room? (eg seating and, if appropriate, monitors, projector screens etc)

Excellent / Good / **Average** / Poor / Very Poor

Further comments... **Whilst its purpose is to be recognised, the floor mounted monitor unfortunately obscured the public's view of the meeting's Chairman, his Deputy and key council officers. Could consideration be given to:**

- a) **Lowering the screen or tilting it slightly backwards?**
- b) **Raising the seating level of the councillors/officers involved?**

Given the requirement for the public & their representatives (and meeting monitors), to attempt to juggle comparable amounts of documents as the committee/officers/press, would the provision of seating with swing-mounted desk tops help alleviate the obvious discomfort witnessed/experienced during the meeting?

4. Were copies of the agenda available on the public seating?

Yes / No

Further comments.....

5. To what extent did the agenda sheet clearly explain the process of public participation?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments:... **Added to the presence of a well briefed & helpful Public Speaking Co-ordinator seated in the foyer adjacent to the entrance to the Walton Suite.**

6. How clearly was the opportunity for public participation announced at the beginning of the meeting?

Completely / Quite clearly / **Partly** / Not at all

Further comments...**Although it was touched on, as someone attending a planning meeting for the first time, I thought the briefing would have been helpful at the beginning of each of the am/pm sessions so as to accommodate later attendees.**

7. Were you asked directly by the Democratic Services Officer or the Chairman if you wanted to speak during public participation?

Yes / No

Further comments... **Although this facility was self-evident on arrival at the foyer to the Walton Suite, the Chairman also made reference during his welcoming comments.**

8. If there was public participation, how did the Chairman deal with it and to what extent were the questions/concerns answered fairly?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments... **The meeting's Chairman is to be commended for the impartial & helpful manner with which he managed the public's participation.**

9. How well both the public speakers and the Councillors could be heard?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments... **Although perhaps it would be helpful to both Councillors & public speakers if the base of their microphone had a reminder of the need to "speak-up" so as to ensure that they can be heard by everyone attending the meeting?**

10. Councillors who are not members of the Committee can sometimes contribute to the debate, including Portfolio Holders, Ward Members and the Leader. If applicable, how well was this fact communicated to the public?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...

11. Following on from question 10 above, and specifically relating to the Planning Committee, to what extent was the Planning Protocol followed (eg: Members of the Committee not voting because they had an interest or perhaps because they had pre-determined the application)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...

12. If any Councillors declared an interest, how well was it made clear what the actual interest was (i.e. Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, personal or personal & prejudicial and a brief mention of the circumstances)?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...

13. Did any Member leave the room after declaring an interest, perhaps after making a statement under Public Participation as permitted by the Code of Conduct?

Yes / **No**

Further comments.....

14. When items were debated, how well did the Chairman achieve a fair and balanced discussion?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...**The Chairman gave more than adequate time for the committee to conduct an informed & even-handed debate on planning issues associated with the applications under consideration.**

15. How well did the Chairman summarise the debate prior to a decision being made?

Completely / Quite well / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...**Whilst individual councillors announced their voting intentions and the reasons why, on the single occasion where the Chairman exercised his "casting vote," no reason was given as to why he had refused that particular application.**

16. How clearly did you understand the actual decision reached by the meeting on each item?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...**Although on occasions where a number of caveats or additional planning conditions have/are to be stipulated, perhaps in the interests of clarity for the public attendees, the Head of Development could make reference to such requirements immediately prior to the Chairman summarising the debate and announcing the Committee's decision?**

17. Did any other Code of Conduct issues arise?

Yes / **No**

Further comments.....

18. Overall, to what extent was the debate and decision easy to follow for the lay person?

Completely / **Quite well** / Partly / Not at all

Further comments...**It would be anticipated that this assessment comment of this aspect of the meeting could/should be improved through the introduction of my recommendation to Q16.**

OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE MEETING, ARRANGEMENTS ETC:

Recognising the potential scope of public interest and sensitivities that could be involved in the considerations and decision making process undertaken by members of the Planning Committee, it is assessed that the meeting held on Thursday 10th December 2015 reflected & maintained the well-established standards set by Winchester City Council.

I would also request that the following additional observations/comments receive due consideration?

- a) Given the current National Threat Assessment relating to public security, would it not be appropriate for the Chairman to brief all attendees on the procedures to be followed in the event that the Guild Hall has to be evacuated in an emergency?

- b) It was noticeable to me and others attending the meeting that the workings of the lift providing access to the Walton Suite appeared to be long overdue appropriate servicing so as to facilitate confidence in its operation!

Bill Bailey
Independent Person to the Standards Committee of WCC

29th December 2015