

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

30 January 2017

Attendance:

Councillor Thacker (Chairman) (P)

Councillors:

Bell (P)

Berry (P)

Izard (P)

Laming (P)

Mather (P)

Read

Parish Representatives (non-voting co-optees):

Ms J Bond (P), Mr J Chapman and Ms M Hill (P)

Independent Persons (non-voting advisors) in attendance:

Mr B Bailey (P), Canon Dr R Lindley (P) and Mr J Spokes (P)

1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Mather and Thacker declared disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of agenda items due to their role as a County Councillor and wife of a County Councillor respectively. Councillor Mather was also a member representative of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service which was specifically referred to as part of agenda item 3 below. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, they remained in the room, spoke and voted under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Standards Committee to participate and vote in all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 15 June 2016 be approved and adopted.

3. **INDEPENDENT PERSONS RECRUITMENT AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES**

(Report ST114 refers)

During discussion, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that it was not intended for a deputy Independent Person to be appointed for the future. He explained that a deputy had previously been in place in case workloads and possible conflicts of interest had potentially discounted others from taking part in some specific cases. However, this had not been an issue

during the previous two municipal years. He was confident that the existing workload of the Independent Person at Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority could be easily incorporated into that of Winchester's.

The Committee referred to the processes of both authorities in dealing with potential standards matters. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that each of the three Independent Persons to be appointed would be a shared resource for both the authorities. They would be called upon when required by each of the authority's respective Monitoring Officers. The Monitoring Officers would also liaise to ensure continuity of processes and that case work was allocated properly. It was also pointed out that in addition to the small financial saving to be achieved, the proposals would create efficiencies in terms of use of officer time for both authorities.

During discussion, the Committee welcomed proposals to extend the terms of office for both the Independent Persons and the Parish Representatives to potentially four years. This would help to assist developing an understanding of the role and for their continuity.

Finally, the Committee discussed the process for sifting applications received for the roles and it was agreed that this be undertaken by an informal group of three Councillors from the Standards Committee (Councillors Berry, Izard and Thacker). This group would put forward three applicants (plus one reserve) for each of the roles to a special meeting of the Standards Committee. This would recommend the appointments to be made to full Council on 5 April 2017. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority would be invited to send representatives to be part the informal group.

RESOLVED:

1. Independent Persons being a shared resource, acting also as an Independent Person (collectively) for Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS), be agreed.
2. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to determine the detailed recruitment process selection criteria, and the members of an informal joint panel (to include Councillors Berry, Izard and Thacker) to advise on the appointments.
3. That a special meeting of the Standards Committee be held to determine its recommendations to full Council on the appointment of three Independent Persons and three Parish Representatives.
4. That appointments made to the three posts of Independent Persons and the three posts of Parish Representatives be each made on a two year term of office (i.e. until 30 April 2019), but that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with

the Chairman, be authorised to extend the terms of office for a further two years.

4. **UPDATE AND FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

(Report ST115 refers)

With regard to the matters referred to in paragraph 8.5 of the Report, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that both parties were aware of the issues that had meant that the investigation was to have taken longer than had been expected before its consideration by a Standards (Determination) Sub Committee. It was also clarified that the outcomes of Assessment Sub Committees were exempt information and should not be discussed with any third parties outside the Council.

The Committee referred to the list of formal Council meetings which Standards Committee representatives may wish to observe in due course, as it had done previously. It was agreed that a rolling programme of visits be drawn up by officers in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the Report be noted
2. That a rolling programme of visits to formal Council meetings by Standards Committee representatives be drawn up by officers in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

5. **GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

(Report ST116 refers)

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained why the limits for estimated values of gifts and hospitality differed for officers and for Councillors. This was because there should be minimal opportunity for officers to be in receipt of gifts and hospitality as part of their duties, whereas for Councillors it was appreciated that this was more likely to occur as they undertook their community work, and it would be impractical to have a lower limit leading to a need for more regular declarations. It was noted that most other authorities had adopted a £50 limit. The detailed guidance also referred to the frequency of receipt and perception of the public, i.e. there was an expectation that a Councillor should do their work for their allowance only. However, it was accepted that there would be occasions where it would be difficult to refuse gifts and/or hospitality as part of their day to day roles. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services also drew the Committee's attention to the Register of Interests form that was completed annually by all Members and this included a section for any gifts and hospitality declared. Any interest involving the donor of gifts and hospitality to a particular Member would have to be declared by that Member at relevant Council meetings

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.50pm.

Chairman