

**At a meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on WEDNESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2016 at 12.10 pm.**

**Present:-**

Councillor H. Trueman in the Chair

Councillors Curran, Marshall, Mordey, Scanlan, S. Watson and A. Wilson together Councillor Hepple (Hetton Town Council) and Councillor R. Heron (Hetton Town Council).

**Part I**

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Wood and Mrs S. Joseph (Independent Person).

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2015 Part I**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2015 Part I (copy circulated), was submitted.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations made.

**Committee on Standards in Public Life: “Ethical Standards for Providers of Public Services - Guidance**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) informing the Committee of a guidance document issued by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) in December 2015, which emphasises the key messages from a previous report issued in 2014, which reflected that high ethical standards are important for society as a whole, particularly where public money is being spent on public services and functions and for users of public services, and provides practical guidance to providers of public services and commissioners, in respect of the application of ethical considerations.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Head of Law and Governance briefed the Committee on the report highlighting that the report of the CSPL advises that it is incumbent on those bodies which

commission and procure public services and those who are ultimately responsible and accountable for them, to obtain assurance that high ethical standards are being met.

The Head of Law and Governance highlighted that the report of the CSPL had been shared with procurement and commissioning colleagues in the Council and the Commercial Team within Legal Services in order to reinforce that due regard should be paid to ethical standards considerations, as part of the commissioning/procurement process.

Consideration having been given to the report it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Review of Procedure for Dealing with Complaints**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) on a review of the procedure for dealing with complaints under the Members' Code of Conduct.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Head of Law and Governance briefed the Committee on the report advising that as the procedures for dealing with complaints had been operating for over three years that it was timely for them to be reviewed.

The Head of Law and Governance referred Members to paragraph 4 of the report which proposed that the procedures be varied to provide for the assessment of complaints to be referred to an Assessment Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee, to determine whether or not they should be investigated, rather than for this function to be undertaken by her (with the exception of certain scenarios which she would retain, as detailed in the report), in order to provide greater 'ownership' of assessment decisions by Elected Members.

The Head of Law and Governance advised that the proposal was for an Assessment Sub-Committee to be comprised of three voting Members of the Standards Committee and likewise for a Hearing Sub-Committee to be established to hear complaints, the detail of which was set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report.

Consideration having been given to the proposals to vary the procedures for dealing with complaints, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-
  - (i) approval be given to the amendments to the procedures for dealing with complaints referred to in the report, subject to, in respect of the proposed changes to the delegated authority to the Head of Law and Governance to assess complaints, such amendments being agreed by Council;

- (ii) the Head of Law and Governance be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, to make such other minor or consequential amendments to the procedure document as are considered appropriate for consistency; and
- (iii) Council be recommended to agree to the delegation of authority to the Standards Committee to assess complaints about Members, as set out in the report and to amend Article 9 of the Constitution to reflect the new arrangements, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

### **Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006**

At the instance of the Chairman it was:-

4. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it contains information relating to individuals and information which is likely to reveal the identity of individuals (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 1 and 2).

(Signed) H. TRUEMAN,  
Chairman.

#### **Note:-**

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to members of the public.

Additional minutes in respect of a further item is included in Part II.