

AT A MEETING of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on 2 March 2012.

PRESENT:

Independent Chairman:

p Mr. M. C. James

Councillors:

a B. Dash

p A. Gibson

p G. Hockley

p D. Harrison

a A. Rice

a J. West

a S. Woodward

Independent Members:

p Mr. G. Ellis

a Mrs B. North

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs B. North and Councillors B. Dash, J. West and S. Woodward. It was noted that Councillor D. Harrison was deputising for Councillor Dash.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Committee held on 8 February 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. LOCALISM ACT 2011 – STANDARDS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive (Item 5 in the Minute Book).

The Deputy Monitoring Officer updated Members on the details of the Localism Act 2011 with regard to changes to the standards regime and confirmed that further Regulations and an implementation date were still awaited. It was explained that the final decision for how this was to be implemented in Hampshire was to be taken by a future meeting of the County Council. Members agreed that the Standards Committee should input into the County Council's decision with the benefit of their experience of the current system.

A number of aspects of the standards regime were discussed, including the role of the Independent Person, the content of the Code of Conduct

and the name and status of the committee to be tasked with upholding the Code. Members acknowledged that some changes were required due to the new legislation and that this provided a good opportunity to streamline the process for dealing with complaints. The Committee was generally supportive of the current structure and were agreed that many elements should be retained. Therefore it was resolved that the following recommendations be made to the County Council:

- i) That a new Standards Committee be formed to deal with standards issues. It should continue to have independent members and if possible an independent chair, (if the voting issue could be overcome).
- ii) That more than one independent person be appointed.
- iii) The Standards Committee to continue to deal with dispensations.
- iv) The existing Code of Conduct to be retained, subject to amendments required by the legislation.
- v) The obligation to register all current personal interests to be retained and all Members to be asked to sign a declaration that they will abide by the Code when elected.
- vi) That Standing Orders are not amended to require members to leave the room when considering a matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.
- vii) That the new arrangements to deal with complaints are established to become less formal and more expeditious. That officers should have more flexibility to seek early resolution of complaints and to act as an initial filter. The possibility of Members and officers having arbitration training, be considered.
- viii) That the sanctions listed in the report be adopted with respect to a breach of the Code of Conduct and that an appeal mechanism be built into the process. Consideration be given to a role for the independent persons in the appeals process.
- ix) That the Independent Remuneration Panel be tasked with setting an allowance for the independent persons.