

BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the **JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Hadleigh on 14 November 2012 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Mr G M Brewster
Mrs E B Gibson-Harries
Mr A F D W Osborne
Mr D J Osborne

Co-opted Members:

Miss P Cook
Mr C A Reeve
Mr J G Watson

In attendance:

Kathryn Seward - Monitoring Officer
Steve Ellwood - Democratic Services Manager & Deputy
Monitoring Officer
Anne Brown - Interim Governance Executive
Amanda Hobday - Monitoring Officer Assistant

17 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A C Bavington, Mr C A Roberts and Mrs N Willshere.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

19 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Joint Standards Committee meeting held on [23 August 2012](#) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

20 PETITIONS

None received.

21 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

22 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed co-opted members Mr C A Reeve, Mr J G Watson and Miss P Cook to the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer left the room prior to the next agenda item.

23 GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Interim Governance Executive gave a verbal report, explaining that she had been tasked by the two authorities to carry out a review of Governance, looking at how the two councils function both separately and together.

As part of the integration of staff across both authorities, a review of the Legal Services and Democratic Services structure is currently being undertaken and the Interim Governance Executive has been tasked with making recommendation to the Management Team. A draft report is in the process of being prepared for Members and the new structure is expected to commence following the next Annual General Meeting.

Following completion of the verbal report, the Committee discussed a number of queries and observations with the Interim Governance Executive and expressed their support for the current Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted.

The Interim Governance Executive left the meeting at this point.

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer rejoined the meeting prior to the next agenda item.

24 ARRANGEMENTS FOR CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The Monitoring Officer gave a verbal update on arrangements concerning the co-opted members of the Joint Standards Committee. An allowance of £730 per annum on the basis of quarterly meetings was ratified at the last meeting of Full Council of each Authority. Following the resignation of Mrs T Kavvadias as a Parish Councillor, a vacancy had arisen for a Parish / Town Council representative on the Joint Standards Committee. Miss P Cook has been appointed to the vacancy, pending ratification by the Full Council in December 2012.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted.

25 CREATION OF A SUFFOLK STANDARDS BOARD

The Monitoring Officer presented a report ([Paper JST/06/12](#)) concerning draft proposals for the creation of a 'Suffolk Standards Board' for the determination of final stage complaints under the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct.

The Committee discussed the possible terms of reference that had been put forward. Views were expressed that the 'Board' members should be drawn from the Joint Standards Committee, that the creation of sub-committees might be a more suitable method for determining complaints and that the quorum should be greater than 2.

RESOLVED

That the Monitoring Officer continue discussions on the proposals for the creation of a 'Suffolk Standards Board' and report back to the next meeting of the Joint Standards Committee.

26 OPERATION OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Monitoring Officer gave a verbal update on the operation of the complaints process. Since the date on which the reports for this meeting of the Joint Standards Committee had been prepared, four new complaints have been received, which are yet to be assessed. The new complaints process will be applied to these complaints and an update will be provided at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted.

27 COMPLIANCE WITH THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

The Monitoring Officer presented a report ([Paper JST/07/12](#)) apprising Members of the measures taken to comply with the requirements within Chapter 7 of the Localism Act and to identify any further actions required.

A verbal update to the report was given, advising that two register of interests forms were outstanding for Babergh District councillors, one of which was not to have been expected on health grounds. Of the requests by two parish councillors not to have information on the register published, one request had been withdrawn and the other granted.

The Chairman thanked the Monitoring Officer for her endeavours in ensuring that both councils were compliant with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

RESOLVED

That the content of report JST/07/12 and the verbal update be noted.

28 ADOPTION OF CODE OF CONDUCT BY PARISH COUNCILS

The Monitoring Officer gave a verbal report that the Suffolk Association of Local Councils has advised that all parish and town councils within the districts of Babergh and Mid Suffolk have adopted the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted.

29 STATISTICAL REPORT

The Monitoring Officer presented a report ([Paper JST/08/12](#)) containing details of interests and gifts/items of hospitality declared by Members during the period August 1 to October 31 2012, and also on the assessment of complaints received about councillors' conduct during that period.

Since the date on which the report was prepared, one complaint had been received against a Babergh District Councillor and three complaints had been received regarding Bentley Parish Council. The outstanding complaint at Mid Suffolk listed at Appendix B to Paper JST/08/12 was raised under the old complaints system and is being progressed under the new system.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in Paper JST/08/12 and the verbal update be noted.

30 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT UPDATE – Case No. 31092

The Monitoring Officer presented a report ([Paper JST/08/12](#)) informing the Committee of the actions taken pursuant to its decision on 23 August 2012 finding Councillor Richard Michette of Long Melford Parish Council in breach of the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED

That it be noted and agreed that the sanctions recommended by the Joint Standards Committee on 23 August 2012 in respect of complaints reference 31092(1) and (2) have been fulfilled.

31 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Joint Standards Committee will be held on Friday, 15 February 2013 at 2pm at the Mid Suffolk District Council offices.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked the Monitoring Officer and the Monitoring Officer Assistant for their work carried out in supporting the Joint Standards Committee.

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Chairman