

Standards Committee

25 April 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor Underhill (Chair)
Councillor Burley
Councillor A. Ditta
Councillor E. Hazell
Councillor J. Murray

Independent Persons Present

Dr. A. Sen
Mr A. Green

141/17 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors A. Andrew and R. Martin.

142/17 Substitutions

There were no substitutions.

143/17 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2017, copies having been previously circulated to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

145/17 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

146/17 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items for consideration in private session.

147/17 DBS Checks for Members

The Committee considered a report on DBS checks for Members (annexed).

The Head of Law (Contentious) explained that as recommended by the Committee all Members would be required to have a DBS check at least every four years and complete an annual self declaration. The final details of how the scheme was going to be implemented and administered were being agreed for introduction during the summer.

The Committee were pleased that progress was being made and asked that clear and simple guidance accompany the new requirements. Members noted that whilst it was accepted that DBS certificates were transferable between organisations it was imperative that the Council had sight of the documents before accepting them.

Resolved:

That a further report on how the criminal record check scheme will be implemented be received at the next meeting.

148/17 Member Development

The Head of Law (Contentious) updated the Committee on recent activity to re-establish a clear Member Development Programme. He explained that a recent cross-party focus group had taken place that had provided valuable feedback. A further focus group to consider the needs of new Members was scheduled. The feedback would then be analysed and the programme established.

A Member commented that the focus group had seen a very positive and serious discussion take place and had been very worthwhile. With regards to new Members it was felt important to recognise the different needs of Members as they settled into their role.

The meeting discussed the importance of attending training and keeping skills up to date. The need for feedback to identify development needs was noted.

Following a question the Head of Law (Contentious) advised that, other than training that was required to sit on certain committees, it was not possible to compel Members to attend development sessions.

As part of a discussion on Member development needs around IT some Members expressed frustration with the functionality of portable devices and asked that feedback on the issue be provided to ICT.

Resolved:

That feedback be provided to ICT on issues regarding the functionality of portable devices used by Members.

149/17 Case study

The Head of Law (Contentious) introduced two member complaint case studies. In doing so he highlighted case law that had assisted in defining when a member was acting as a private individual or as an elected member.

Members were keen to develop their understanding on the code of conduct and investigations into member behaviour and requested an external trainer be invited in for this purpose.

Resolved:

That an external trainer be invited to provide a member development session on codes of conducts and Standards Committee investigations.

150/17 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be confirmed at Annual Council in May 2017.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.12 p.m.

Chair:

Date: