

**MEMBER CONDUCT COMMITTEE
12TH SEPTEMBER 2016**

PRESENT: Councillors Parsons (Chair), Tassell (Vice-chair), Bentley, Bokor, Hadji-Nikolaou, C. Harris, and Taylor

Ms B. Crick (Parish Member)

Head of Strategic Support (Monitoring Officer)
Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: Ms A. Marshall (Parish Member)

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2016 were confirmed as a true record and signed.

8. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

9. QUESTIONS UNDER COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 12.8

No questions had been received.

10. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

A verbal update was provided by the Deputy Monitoring Officer concerning the Register of Members' Interests and the processes for ensuring it was kept up to date.

He stated that reminders were usually sent to all Borough Councillors approximately every six months asking them to confirm if their entry in the Register of Members' Interests required amending or had not changed.

Recently, a second reminder had been sent to Borough Councillors requesting this confirmation, and at present 50% of Borough Councillors had replied to these reminders. A similar letter had been sent to the clerks of parish and town councils asking if they could contact their councillors to check if their entry in the Register of Members' Interests were correct.

RESOLVED

1. that the Democratic Services Manager be asked to send an additional reminder letter to Borough Councillors who have not responded so far, including the relevant Group's Chair and Chief Whip, requesting confirmation that their entry in the Register of Members' Interests either requires amending or has not changed;

2. that the Democratic Services Manager be asked to send a reminder letter to the clerks of parish and town councils requesting confirmation from their councillors' that their entry in the Register of Members' Interests either requires amending or has not changed.

Reasons

1. The Committee were disappointed with the 50% response rate and wished to encourage all Borough Councillors to respond promptly to the information request with a positive confirmation of whether or not there had been a change to their entry in the Register of Members' Interests.
2. The Committee wished to encourage parish and town councillors to respond promptly to the information request with a positive confirmation of whether or not there had been a change to their entry in the Register of Members' Interests.

11. ADVICE ON DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Considered a report of the Monitoring Officer proposing a letter to be sent to councillors detailing those Council, Cabinet and committee reports where there may be a greater likelihood that declarations of a personal interest or a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest would be required (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED that the draft letter appended to the report be distributed to all Borough Councillors.

Reason

The Committee agreed that the information provided in the draft letter was helpful and wished all Borough Councillors to benefit from the guidance concerning where there may be a greater likelihood that declarations of a personal interest or a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest would be required.

12. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Committee considered an opportunity to suggest possible amendments to the Constitution as part of the annual review process. The Monitoring Officer stated that the Constitution was the responsibility of all Borough Councillors. The Member Conduct Committee's role was to oversee those aspects of the Constitution regarding member conduct; other issues could be raised separately with the Monitoring Officer or the Democratic Services Manager.

Members discussed how the Panel hearing and appeal process operated and how councillors were guided to conduct themselves in the different roles including ward councillor, and attending meetings of the Borough Council and outside bodies.

RESOLVED

1. that a presentation regarding the Panel hearing and appeals process be provided at the Committee's meeting scheduled on 5th December 2016;
2. that Borough Councillors are asked whether they would like to attend a training session in early 2017 regarding a general overview of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Reasons

1. To provide the Committee with a clear understanding of how the Panel hearing and appeals process currently operates and to enable a review of the process.
2. The Committee wished to determine the level of interest in the training prior to arranging the session.

13. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Considered a report of the Monitoring Officer providing an update on complaints received about breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct and any issues arising from those complaints (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Monitoring Officer noted that one complaint had been referred for a hearing and the recommendations from the Member Conduct Panel hearing that had been held earlier in the year had been completed.

RESOLVED that the current position in respect of complaints about breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct that have been received be noted.

Reason

To keep the Committee informed about complaints.

14. WORK PROGRAMME

Considered a report of the Monitoring Officer enabling the Committee to agree a work programme to plan its future business (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED that the Committee's current work programme be noted and updated in accordance with the decisions taken during consideration of this item and other items on the agenda.

Reason

To enable the Committee to fulfil its role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 7th November 2016 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of the minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Member Conduct Committee.