



**MINUTES of
JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE
26 JANUARY 2021**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor M G Bassenger
Vice-Chairman	Councillor Mrs J L Fleming
Councillors	R G Boyce MBE, A L Hull, C Mayes, S P Nunn, R H Siddall, Mrs M E Thompson and Stilts
Town Councillor	Councillor P Stilts
Independent Person	Mr N Hodson
In Attendance	Councillors Mrs P A Channer, M S Heard, K M H Lagan and C Morris

1. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the remote meeting, held under new regulations which came into effect on 4 April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He took Members through some general housekeeping issues, together with the etiquette for the meeting. Finally, he asked Officers and Councillors in attendance to introduce themselves.

This was followed by a roll call of Committee Members present.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies had been received.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED by assent that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 October 2020 be approved and confirmed.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillor S P Nunn declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7 – Appointment of a New Independent Person and a Reserve, as he was acquainted with two of the candidates.

5. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE - BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer that set out the Council's position in relation to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Best Practice Recommendations attached at Appendix 1.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Lead Legal Specialist and Monitoring Officer to present the detail. He took the Committee through the fifteen Best Practice Recommendations.

Members commented on the majority of recommendations and the consensus was that they were largely relevant. In response to queries raised the Monitoring Officer responded as follows:

- that gifts in excess of £50 accepted by Members must be declared. These were generally related to hospitality;
- that there was a link on the Council's homepage to the Code of Conduct;
- that Members resolve when reviews take place bearing in mind that a new Code of Conduct was due to be introduced this year;
- that breaches alone should be published, not allegations;
- that anyone seconded on a project from another Local Authority for the purpose of the Council's functions were treated as an employee, e.g. another Monitoring Officer to support the complaints procedure

In response to the Monitoring Officer raising the issue of the potential need for a public interest test under Best Practice Recommendation 6 Councillor Thompson proposed that the addition of a definition of public interest test be included in the complaints procedure information and this was seconded by Councillor Mayes.

The Chairman moved the recommendation as set out in the report with the addition of the inclusion of the public interest test in the complaints procedure information to the Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Thompson and the Committee agreed the recommendation by assent.

RESOLVED that the Joint Standards Committee considered the Committee on Standards in Public Life Best Practice Recommendations at Appendix 1, made any necessary changes to the standards procedures and agreed to include the public interest test under recommendation 6 in the complaints procedure information.

6. ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

RESOLVED that the Committee adjourn for a short comfort break at 15:01pm.

7. RESUMPTION OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED that the business of the meeting resumed at 15:10pm.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

9. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW INDEPENDENT PERSON AND A RESERVE

The Committee considered the report and associated appendices of the Monitoring Officer that provided details of candidates for the roles of Independent Person and a Reserve and recommended that an allowance should be given to the Reserve.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Lead Legal Specialist and Monitoring Officer to present the detail. He took Members through the summary of key issues. It was noted that the two periods of four years served by both the current Independent Person and Reserve would end on 28 February 2021, therefore new appointments had to be made. He drew Members' attention to the candidate details at Appendix 1 and the role requirements at Appendix 2. He concluded by thanking both the Independent Person and Reserve for their skills, commitment and support over the past eight years.

The Chairman then took the Committee through the process for the remainder of this item. He advised that before the Committee dealt with the recommendations as set out in the report, the five candidates would be interviewed. Following the interviews, he would ask each individual Committee member to state their preference for both roles. The Committee would then come together to agree the appointments and recommendation (i).

The five interviews then took place and the Committee agreed the successful applicants for both roles. The Chairman moved recommendation (i) as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Fleming. He put recommendation (i) to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

The Chairman then moved recommendation (ii) as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Mayes.

Following a brief discussion on allowances the Chairman put recommendation (ii) to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

RECOMMENDED

- (i) That Mr John Mitchell be appointed as the new Independent Person and Mrs Kathy Payne as the new Reserve Independent Person.

RESOLVED

- (ii) That an allowance of 7% of the Members' basic allowance should be awarded to the role of Reserve Independent Person from 1 March 2021.

10. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Before closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Mr Norman Hodson, the Independent Person present at the meeting, for all his hard work and support over the years. He concluded by thanking all Members and Officers for their contributions.

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 5.15 pm.

M G BASSENGER
CHAIRMAN