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South Northamptonshire Council

Standards Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held as a remote meeting on Wednesday 8 July 2020 at 10.30 am.

Present Councillor John Townsend (Chairman)
 Councillor Steven Hollowell (Vice-Chairman)
 Councillor Ann Addison
 Councillor Sandra Barnes MBE

Apologies Councillor Lisa Samiotis
for
Absence:

Officers: Andrew Hunkin, Executive Director: Resources (Monitoring
 Officer)
 Diana Davies, Democratic Services Officer
 Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

1 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **Appointment of Vice Chairman of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2020-21**

That Councillor Steven Hollowell be appointed Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee for the municipal year 2020-21.

3 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 24 January 2013, 15 January 2014, 18 May 2016, 17 May 2017, 16 May 2018 and 15 May 2019 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman in due course.

4 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

5 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

6 **Draft Annual Report**

The Executive Director: Resources (Monitoring Officer) submitted a report which provided a summary of the volume, nature and outcome of Standards complaints received by the Monitoring Officer during 2019/20.

In response to Members' comments regarding how complaints were managed and communication with the Committee, the Executive Director: Resources (Monitoring Officer) explained that he and his predecessor as Monitoring Officers had been dealing with complaints of alleged misconduct by SNC Members and constituent Town and Parish Councils within the South Northants area under the local determination arrangements that had been agreed by Full Council in July 2012 when the new standards arrangements came into force.

In considering the report, the Committee requested that the Executive Director Resources (Monitoring Officer) review the current 'local determination arrangements' to ensure more inclusion of Standards Committee members which would aid transparency. The Executive Director should anonymise complaints and send to Standards Committee members upon receipt and submit a detailed report of complaints received to each meeting, which should be held at least at 6 monthly intervals. The Executive Director Resources (Monitoring Officer) confirmed he would amend the arrangements in accordance with the changes agreed by the Committee.

In response to Members' comments about neither the Independent Persons nor the Parish Council representative being in attendance at the meeting, the Executive Director Resources (Monitoring Officer) explained that the council currently had 2 Independent Persons, whom he was in regular contact with, and one parish Council representative. The Committee agreed that recruitment to the two vacant Parish Council representative posts be filled as soon as practicable. The Committee further requested that the Independent Persons and Parish representatives be invited to future meetings of the Standards Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Standards Committee Annual Report be endorsed and recommended to Full Council to note, subject to the following amendments:
 - (i) The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee, to review the Standards Complaints arrangements so that the Standards Committee was more involved in reviewing the nature and content of complaints.
 - (ii) The Committee to have more contact with the Independent Persons and co-opted town and parish council committee members
 - (iii) The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee, to co-op two town/parish council councillors to the two vacant positions on the Committee.

7 Local Government Ethical Standards

The Executive Director Resources (Monitoring Officer) submitted a report on the *Local Government Ethical Standards – A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life* report.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.50 am

Chairman:

Date:

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