

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on 07 November 2017 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer at 2.00pm.**

Members present:

<b>District Members</b>	Mrs S Butikofer Mr B Hannah Ms M Prior Mr R Reynolds Mr R Shepherd Mr R Stevens (Chair)
<b>Other Members In Attendance</b>	Mrs H Cox
<b>Officers in attendance</b>	The Monitoring Officer The Democratic Services Officer

### **8. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

### **9. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

### **10. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Committee held on 03 October 2017 and the minutes of the Standards Committee Hearings held on 18 July were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **11. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

### **12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **13. PARISH AND DISTRICT MEMBERS' REGISTER OF INTERESTS AND OFFICER REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

Members were reminded that the Parish and District Members' Register of Interests and Officer Register of Gifts and Hospitality were available for inspection in the Democratic Services section.

### **14. REVIEW OF THE PROTOCOL ON MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS**

Following an incident with a member of the public at the last meeting of Full Council, the Constitution Working Party had, on 11 October 2017, considered the Standing Orders concerning public questions and reviewed the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations. As a result a recommendation regarding public questions was due to go to Full Council on 15 November 2017 for an amendment to be made to Standing Orders to ensure that statements and follow-up questions were submitted 24 hours in advance of a meeting. If a statement was defamatory etc it would be disallowed by the Monitoring Officer, or she could advise on framing it more appropriately.

The Constitution Working Party had asked that the Standards Committee, as responsible body for Member conduct, should consider the Protocol as they believed there should be a clearer distinction between Member and Officer roles.

The Protocol reflected the fact that Members did not get involved in employment matters, except at chief officer level. However, officers had democratic rights and could receive assistance from their local Member but that could result in grey areas. The present procedure was that Members should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer but this was not ideal. Some councils had a complete ban on Member involvement in employment matters and the Constitution Working Party supported this view. NNDC had always been a trusting, informal Council but times had changed and it could be appropriate to reconsider this approach. Mr B Hannah expressed concern but agreed with MS M Prior that the role of Members should be to signpost employees to agencies who could really help them. Such agencies would include UNISON, CAB or ACAS. Mrs H Cox said that it was important that members of staff were protected but equally important for Members to understand that there were boundaries regarding what they could be told by officers. Some Members expressed disappointment regarding behaviour at the last meeting of Full Council. It had put the Council in a difficult position regarding an issue which had hitherto been handled well and confidentially.

It was agreed that a recommendation from the Standards Committee regarding amendments to the Member/Officer Protocol should go to November Full Council, including a general statement that Members were not expected to be involved in employment matters on a daily basis. The Monitoring Officer would draft the amendment and circulate it to Members for their comments. After the amendment had been to Full Council she would draw Members' attention to it via the Members' Bulletin.

### **RESOLVED**

**To recommend the following amendment to the Member/Officer Protocol to Full Council:**

### 3. Members' Constituency Role and Individual Employees

3.1 A Member may be asked for advice and support by an employee who is one of their constituents. Employees are entitled to seek such assistance in the same way as any other member of the public. However, Members should be careful not to prejudice the Council's position or their own position in relation to disciplinary procedures or employment matters in respect of an employee. A Member approached for help in such circumstances should seek to direct Employees to other sources of help and not become directly involved.

The next meeting of the Standards Committee was scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

The meeting concluded at 3.05 pm

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Chairman