

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of a Standards Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in Chamber Suite 3, The Arc, Clowne on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 1000 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members: - Councillors M. Crane, H.J. Gilmour, D.S. Watson and G.O. Webster.

Cooptee Members: - J. Yates and R. J. Jaffray.

Officers: S.E.A. Sternberg (Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer), M. Kane (Governance Manager) and A. Bluff (Governance Officer).

J. Yates in the Chair.

### **0906a. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.E. Bennett and S. Wallis.

### **0906b. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

### **0906c. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **0906d. MINUTES – 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014**

Moved by Councillor H. J. Gilmour, seconded by Councillor G.O. Webster

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of a Standards Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014 be agreed as a true record.

### **0906e. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14**

Members considered the latest Annual Report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL).

CSPL was an independent advisory body which monitored, reported and made recommendations to the government on all issues relating to standards in public life,

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promoting high ethical standards and that the seven Nolan Principles underpinned all aspects of public life.

The Annual Report emphasised the endurance of the seven principles of public life despite the changing democratic landscape with devolution and new models of governance coming to the fore.

At local government level, CSPL had found that the role of the independent person had been well received and that the number of vexatious complaints was falling. However, CSPL expressed concerns over the effectiveness of sanctions which currently provided only for censure or removal from a committee. CSPL believed that the absence of appropriate robust sanctions presented a serious risk to public confidence in local government.

A particular aspect of CSPL's work relating to provision of standards training within induction, (which was presented to a previous meeting of Standards Committee), found that 90% of respondents had adequate arrangements in place. The Committee nevertheless intended to monitor induction programmes and the profile of standards in light of ongoing cuts to local authority funding.

Members were reminded that Bolsover had also introduced a framework so that third party providers/contractors, had policies and procedures in line with the Council's ethical code of conduct.

In response to a Member's query, the Governance Manager noted that Bolsover had seen a major reduction of complaints since the changes resulting from The Localism Act 2011 implemented in 2013.

A discussion took place.

Moved by Councillor H.J. Gilmour, seconded by Councillor G.O. Webster  
**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **0906f. REPORT OF INSPECTION OF ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Members considered the Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council which was provided for Members' information.

Of particular concern for Standards Committee would be the failures highlighted in relation to high standards of conduct and governance arrangements.

In particular the report highlighted:

- A pervading culture of bullying, sexism and misplaced political correctness.
- A failure by members to hold officers to account through scrutiny and to represent the interests of local people.
- Serious weaknesses in the council's taxi licensing procedures.

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The Casey report concluded that the council was failing in its statutory duty to provide best value. It had culminated in the resignation of Rotherham's cabinet, a move to all out elections in 2016 and the probable appointment of Government commissioners to exercise the council's executive and licensing functions as well as senior officer level appointments.

Whilst Bolsover showed no signs of the sorts of issues identified in Rotherham, the report highlighted lessons from which all councils could learn.

A discussion took place.

A Member noted that Rotherham's scrutiny arrangements seemed very weak but felt that Scrutiny at Bolsover was very strong.

Another Member felt that some detailed work should be carried out on the report by Members so that Bolsover could challenge itself and consider what action should be taken about learning lessons from the report.

A lengthy discussion took place.

It was suggested that a special meeting of Standards Committee be arranged as soon as possible so Members could extract the relevant issues from the Rotherham Inspection Report and present the outcomes to the three Scrutiny Committees and also Licensing Committee.

Moved by Councillor M. G. Crane, seconded by Councillor D.S. Watson

**RESOLVED** that (1) the Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council be noted,

(2) a special meeting of Standards Committee be arranged as soon as possible.

(Monitoring Officer/Governance Manager)

### 0906g. ANNUAL GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY REVIEW

Members considered the Annual Review of Gifts and Hospitality.

The Monitoring Officer noted that a reminder would be sent to all departments of the Authority to complete the Gifts and Hospitality Register when required to do so.

Moved by Councillor H.J. Gilmour, seconded by Councillor D.S. Watson

**RESOLVED** that (1) the report be noted,

(2) a reminder be sent to all departments of the Authority to complete the Gifts and Hospitality Register when required to do so.

(Monitoring Officer)

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### 0906h. DRAFT WORK PLAN

Members considered the draft Work Plan for 2014 / 2015.

In relation to the yearly number of complaints against Councillors, the Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that a complaint against a Parish Councillor had been received.

The Governance Manager advised the meeting that the codes for covert and intelligence information gathering in relation to RIPA had been revised – one of the codes was still currently in draft and policies would be updated at a future date. The Monitoring Officer added that a meeting was being held with Magistrates also.

In response to a Member's question, the Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that currently there were no plans to carry out training at parish councils although a work plan would be developed for next year.

Moved by Councillor H.J. Gilmour, seconded by Councillor G.O. Webster  
**RESOLVED** that the Work Plan for 2014/15 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 1045 hours.