

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Ethics Committee held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 24
March 2016

Present:

Members: Councillor J Clifford (Chair)
Councillor A Andrews
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor D Gannon

Employees (by Directorate): C Bradford, Resources Directorate
H Lynch, Resources Directorate
G Paddan, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillor J McNicholas
K Sloan - Independent Person

Public Business

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 September 2015, 30 November 2015 and 29 February 2016 were signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

22. Code of Conduct Update

The Ethics Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Resources, which provided an update on national issues in relation to the ethical behaviour of elected members and the local position in Coventry with regards to Code of Conduct issues.

The report noted the cases taken from three councils from general research which displayed the national picture. In terms of the local picture, the Monitoring Officer had received six new complaints, since the date of the last Ethics Committee meeting. The complaints have been handled in accordance with the agreed Complaints Protocol and no findings have been made by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to members of Coventry City Council. No complaints have been received by the Monitoring Officer in respect of Allesley or Keresley Parish Councils.

The Committee noted that since its last meeting it has held a hearing into complaints against two councillors on behalf of various complainants. A copy of

the Decision Notice relating to the hearing was attached to the report as Appendix 2.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. **Six Monthly Review of Members' Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality**

Members received a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided details of declarations of gifts and hospitality made by members since the Committee last reviewed these at its meeting on 17 September 2015. The Committee considered the declarations attached to the report as Appendix 1. The declarations of gifts and hospitality were detailed for the period between 22 August 2015 and 11 March 2016.

Clarification on timescales was sought from the Monitoring Officer as to the date stated on the declarations; whether it was the date the gift/hospitality was received or when it was recorded?

RESOLVED that a note be circulated to all members advising that they must declare their gift and hospitality within 28 days of receipt.

24. **Six monthly Review of Officers' Gift and Hospitality**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Resources, which set out the entries in the Registers for the period 1 July to 31 December 2015. It also included an extract from the Council's Code of Conduct for Employees relating to gifts and hospitality.

The report noted that the Chief Executive's Office and each Directorate maintained their own separate register of gifts and hospitality. Each register differed slightly in terms of information recorded. Consideration was given to the entries provided with the report and clarification was sought from the Monitoring Officer in respect of clearness of entries. Members were advised that the whole process was being reviewed and with the introduction of 'SharePoint' being implemented; this would enable everyone to disclose the information in a uniform way.

RESOLVED that the section in the Code of Conduct for Employees on gifts and hospitality be reviewed.

25. **Work Programme 2016-17**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Resources which suggested areas of work for the Ethics Committee for the Municipal Year 2016/17.

Members reviewed the Work Programme and the following items were recommended:

- Annual review of parish councils
- Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
- Annual Report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life
- Whistle blowing policy
- Code of Conduct Complaints protocol

- Society Of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) –code for chief officers
- At the first meeting of the Committee of the new municipal year consideration to be given to the Code of Conduct Complaints Protocol in the light of practice

The Committee were advised that if a member wished to bring an item forward for discussion and it was not listed on the Work Programme, that it could be accepted for consideration at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2016/17 be updated to include the agreed items listed above.

26. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business.

(The meeting closed at 10.30am)