

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Ethics Committee held at 10.00 am on
Thursday, 20 July 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor S Walsh (Chair)
Councillor A Andrews
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor K Mulhall

Independent Persons: S Atkinson
A Barton
R Wills
P Wiseman

Employees (by Directorate):

Place S. Bennett, C Bradford, H Lynch, J Newman

Apologies: Councillor D Gannon

Public Business

34. Independent Persons

On behalf of the Committee the Chair, Councillor S Walsh, welcomed Steve Atkinson, Ann Barton, Ruth Wills and Peter Wiseman to their first Committee meeting since their appointment as Independent Persons on the Ethics Committee at the Council's' AGM on 18 May, 2017.

35. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

36. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March, 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

37. Annual Report of the Ethics Committee

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which detailed the work of the Ethics Committee during the 2016/17 Municipal Year, providing an Annual Report for the Committee.

The Annual Report covered the following areas:-

- The membership of the Committee
- Code of Conduct complaints received against Councillors during 2016/17

- Code of Conduct training provided for Councillors, who are required to attend at least every three years.
- The appointment of four Independent Persons to the Committee
- The review of the existing and adoption of a new Council's Complaints Protocol
- The review of the existing and adoption of a new Whistleblowing Policy
- Changes to the Officer and Members Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Concerns relating to the lack of any meaningful sanctions for Councillors who breach the Code of Conduct
- The operation of the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
- Work undertaken on the Member Officer protocols (which will be submitted to the Committee for consideration at a future meeting)

The Committee approved the Annual Report welcoming, in particular, the successful recruitment of the four new Independent Persons.

RESOLVED that the City Council be recommended to:-

- 1) Note the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee**
- 2) Consider whether there is any work within the Committee's terms of reference that Council would wish the Committee to undertake**

38. Code of Conduct Update

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which provided an update on national issues in relation to the ethical behaviour of elected members and the local position in Coventry with regard to Code of Conduct issues.

The Committee discussed three cases from different Councils and noted the outcome for each.

In terms of the local picture, the Committee noted that three complaints had been received since the last Committee meeting in March, 2017, details of which were outlined in the report, none of which had required any further action. The Committee also noted that the decision notice of the Committee held on 17 March into an allegation that a Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct, setting out the sanctions imposed, had been published on the Council's website and that no complaints had been received by the Monitoring Officer in respect of Allesley, Finham or Keresley Parish Councils.

The report outlined training sessions provided for Members on the Code of Conduct and reported that in addition to this, the two Councillors, who were recommended to undertake training as a result of Code of Conduct proceedings, had completed that training.

Details of the recruitment process and successful appointment of the four new Independent Persons on the Committee was also contained in the report.

RESOLVED that the Ethics Committee:-

- 1) **Notes the cases determined under the new regime nationally and requests that the Legal Services Manager, Place and Regulatory, following consultation with the Chair, shares the case updates with all elected Members and;**
- 2) **Notes the local position relating to the Council's Code of Conduct and delegates any actions arising from these to the Legal Services Manager, Place and Regulatory, following consultation with the Chair of Ethics Committee**

39. **Annual Review of the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which set out information about the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and which updated the Committee on actions taken in the last 12 months to encourage Members to keep their declarations up to date. The report also provided information in relation to the frequency with which the online register had been viewed during the year.

RESOLVED that the review of the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests be noted and that a further update be submitted in 12 months.

40. **Work Programme for the Ethics Committee**

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) appended to which was a proposed Work Programme for the Committee for 2017/18.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the Proposed Work programme for Ethics Committee for 2017/18 as appended to the report.

41. **Helen Lynch**

The Chair, Councillor Walsh, indicated that Helen Lynch, Legal Services Manager (Place and Regulatory) and Acting Monitoring Officer, was attending her last Ethics Committee before she leaves the authority to take up her new role as Head of Legal and Democratic Services in Durham.

On behalf of the Committee Councillor Walsh expressed his thanks to Helen for all of the work she has undertaken, particularly in relation to her role as Acting Monitoring Officer, and extended best wishes to Helen for the future.

42. **Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.35 am)

