

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Ethics Committee held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 29
March 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor S Walsh (Chair)
Councillor A Andrews
Councillor K Mulhall
Councillor M Mutton (named substitute for Councillor L Bigham)

Independent Persons S Atkinson
P Wiseman

Employees (by Directorate):

Place S Bennett, C Bradford, S Harriott, J Newman

Apologies: Councillors L Bigham, and D Gannon,
A Barton and R Wills

Public Business

26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December, 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

28. Code of Conduct Update

The Committee received a report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services which provided an update on national issues in relation to ethical behaviour of elected members and the local position in Coventry with regard to Code of Conduct issues.

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

In terms of the local picture, the Committee noted that five complaints had been received since the date of the last meeting, of which four were subject of ongoing investigation, with one being concluded at Stage 1 with no further action required.

The Committee noted that the outcome of a consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) regarding expanding the disqualification criteria for local councillors was still awaited.

In relation to the review currently being undertaken by the Committee on Standards in Public Life into local government ethical standards, the Ethics Committee indicated that a response to the consultation should be sent from them. The terms of reference for the review were detailed in the report.

The Local Government Association has recently published a document entitled “A Councillor’s Workbook on Councillor/Officer Relations”, a copy of which was appended to the report.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the cases determined under the Standards regime nationally be noted and that the Head of Legal Services, following consultation with the Chair of Ethics Committee, shares the case updates with all Members.**
- (2) That the local position relating to the operation of the Council’s Code of Conduct be noted and that any actions arising from these be delegated to the Head of Legal Services, following consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee.**
- (3) That the Head of Legal Services be requested to draft a response on behalf of the Ethics Committee to the consultation on the Committee on Standards in Public Life’s review of local government and circulate that draft response to all Members of the Committee for their views before submitting the response prior to the end of the consultation period.**
- (4) That all Members be sent a link to the Local Government’s Association’s recently published document “A Councillor’s Workbook on Councillor/Officer Relations”**

29. Six Monthly Review of Officers' Gifts and Hospitality

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services which set out the entries in the Register of Officers’ Gifts and Hospitality for the period 1 July to 31 December, 2017.

RESOLVED that the entries contained in the Register of Officers’ Gifts and Hospitality for the period 1 July to 31 December, 2017 be noted.

30. Six Monthly Review of Members' Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services which outlined details of declarations of gifts and hospitality made by

Members since the Committee last reviewed these at its meeting on 14 September, 2017.

RESOLVED that the entries contained in the Register of Members' Gifts and Hospitality from 1 September, 2017 to 28 February, be noted.

31. **Monitoring Officer Protocol**

The Head of Legal Services circulated a draft Monitoring Officer Protocol to enable the Committee to provide any initial thoughts on the draft Protocol, prior to its formal consideration by the City Council.

Members of the Committee were invited to provide any feedback to the Head of Legal Services.

32. **Ombudsman Findings of Maladministration**

The Head of Legal Services reported that complaints to the Local Ombudsman regarding the City Council are reported to the Council's Audit and Procurement Committee and the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership on a yearly basis.

In future, it is proposed that where cases of maladministration by the Council have been found, these will be reported to the Ethics Committee for their consideration and to enable the Committee to consider making recommendations to the appropriate Cabinet Member.

It was noted that a report on complaints to the Local Ombudsman would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

33. **Work Programme for the Ethics Committee 2018/19**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Legal Services appended to which was a proposed Work Programme for the Committee for 2018/19.

Further to Minute 32 above, the Committee noted that a report on cases considered by the Local Ombudsman would be included in the list of items for the Committee's first meeting of the Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the proposed Work Programme for Ethics Committee for 2018/19 as appended to the report.

34. **Councillor K Mulhall**

The Chair, Councillor S Walsh, indicated that Councillor Mulhall was attending his last meeting before stepping down as a Councillor in May.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Councillor Mulhall for his contribution to the work of the Ethics Committee over many years and extended to him very best wishes for the future.

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

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.00 am)