

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILSTANDARDS MEETINGCaddstown Business Support Centre - BidefordWednesday, 13 July 2022 - 10.00 am

PRESENT	Councillor N Laws (Chair)	
	Councillor R Clarke (Vice-Chair)	
	Councillors J Gubb, C Hawkins and D Hurley and K James	
	Independent Members L Bach	
ALSO PRESENT	S Dorey	- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
	T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
	K Hewlett	- Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Inch, Councillor Brenton and Martin Rawle.

14. MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Chair reviewed the minutes with members and a query was raised in relation to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks not being mandatory for Councillors.

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) provided members with background to the decision-making process for DBS checks. She confirmed that although officers encouraged all councillors to complete DBS checks, this could not be enforced and there were no sanctions available for those who do not complete checks. This was something that would need to be legislated for by Government.

It was confirmed that this was discussed at the Constitution working group and as a result it was agreed that completed DBS checks would be listed on the website, and those without a DBS check would remain blank. The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) reiterated that a DBS check is offered to all new Councillors as part of the induction process.

Members suggested that information on DBS checks could be added to a future Member's Bulletin. The role of Members was also highlighted, specifically in relation to allocation of seats on committees.

The Leader Councillor James stated that he would encourage all members to be DBS checked. He also explained the disparity between District and County Council members – County Councillors are required to have a DBS check to sit on meetings related to Children's Social Care and Adult Services, which may explain the high take up of DBS checks for County Councillors.

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) advised members of new legislation that has been published on sexual offences, which means that after 28th June people with specific sexual offences on their record will not be able to hold a post as a Councillor. This has resulted in an updated Election nomination form as a result.

It was proposed by Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Gubb and Resolved:

That the minutes for the meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

(Vote: for, 5, against 0, abstentions 1)

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

***The Chair asked that declarations of interest be made as and when the specific agenda item to which they related was under discussion.***

16. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II (IF APPLICABLE)

It was proposed by Councillor Gubb, seconded by Councillor Clarke and Resolved:

That the agenda, as circulated, be agreed.

(Vote: for, unanimous)

17. URGENT MATTERS OF INFORMATION TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR AND THE COMMITTEE

No items.

18. SANCTIONS PROCESS

Chair introduced the item and explained it was an opportunity to discuss making representations to Government regarding the current sanctions process.

Cllr James advised members that the Local Government Association (LGA) continued to lobby for a the toughening of sanctions and to particularly look at

abuse of fellow members. It was suggested that the Committee consider supporting the LGA approach.

It was proposed by Councillor Gubb, seconded by Councillor Hawkins and Resolved:

That the Standards Committee support the LGA in relation to toughening of sanctions.

(Vote: for, unanimous.)

Following the vote the Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) advised members of the recommendations that came from the consultation on Standards in Public Life and the Government response to some of those recommendations.

During a discussion on sanctions the Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) asked members if there were any specific sanctions members wished to make representations on. The use of suspension during investigation was discussed, along with removal from office in severe circumstances and the potential impact of these were highlighted.

Following discussions, the agreed recommendation was summarised for members and the Leader highlighted the LGA recommendations in relation to the Government consultation response for members. It was suggested that members share their feedback with the Head of Legal and governance (& Monitoring Officer) should further consultations take place.

#### 19. TRAINING - CODE OF CONDUCT

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) introduced members to refresher training on the Code of Conduct and explained that the training would be split over future meetings for member convenience.

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) led a discussion on standards and the Nolan Principles and members were given the opportunity to provide their thoughts on the main challenges to ensuring high standards of conduct as Councillors.

During discussions members agreed to add the model code of conduct to a next agenda for Standards Committee, for comparison with the current TDC version and to discuss possible adoption. It was suggested that this could be shared with the Towns and Parishes to promote consistency in approach.

Further discussion took place in relation to Councillor inductions, the feedback was noted by the Senior Electoral and Democratic Officer for future consideration.

#### 20. FORWARD PLAN

Chair reviewed the forward plan with members.

21. EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chair to move :

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in )Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

It was proposed by Councillor Gubb, seconded by Councillor Clarke and

Resolved:

That the Committee move into Part II for the remainder of the meeting.

(Vote: For, Unanimous)

22. PART II (CLOSED SESSION)

23. COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) confirmed that no new complaints had been received.

Members were advised that the recommendations of the Standards Hearing held in August 2021 were due to return to the September Full Council meeting to review the sanctions.

It was proposed by Councillor Laws, seconded by Councillor Gubb and

Resolved:

That Standards Committee recommend to Full Council the agreed sanctions continue to the end of this Council's term in May 2023.

(Vote: For, unanimous)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.22 am

Chair:

Date: