

JOINT STANDARDS COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Date: 6 July 2015

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: East Northamptonshire Councillors:

**Rosalie Beattie
Andy Mercer
Gill Mercer**

**Valerie Raven-Hill
Rupert Reichhold
Colin Wright**

Town and Parish Councillors:

**Fiona Cowan
Derek Lawson
Dave Munday
Roy Sparkes
Robert Tyman
Arthur Whittaker**

(Collyweston Parish Council)
(Higham Ferrers Town Council)
(Stanwick Parish Council)
(Oundle Town Council)
(Raunds Town Council)
(Yarwell Parish Council)

**Vivienne Barnard
Andrew Sortwell**

Independent Person
Reserve Independent Person

32. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2015/16 MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Andy Mercer be elected as Chairman of the Committee for the 2015/16 Municipal Year

33. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2015/16 MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Arthur Whittaker be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2015/16 Municipal Year

34. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Complaints Committee held on 18 March 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Munday declared an other interest in item 7 on the agenda (Requests for Dispensations) as he had requested a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer in respect of matter to be considered by Stanwick Parish Council in which he had a disclosable pecuniary interest.

37. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

38. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that a request for a dispensation had been received from councillors on Stanwick Parish Council in respect of an item regarding burial plots in the village cemetery which were considered to form a disclosable pecuniary interest.

39. ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report outlining activity in relation to the Standards Framework in the period from the last meeting of the Committee held in March 2015 to date.

She reported that following the elections held in May 2015, 74% of town and parish councillors had returned their Register of Interest forms. However, there were six parish councils for which no returns had been received. A reminder letter had been sent to all councillors who had not returned their forms. It was noted that the majority of district councillors had returned their Register of Interest forms. Having regard to the advice of the Independent Person, the committee advised the Monitoring Officer that they would wish to meet in September if no significant improvement had been made in the receipt of Register of Interest forms from the outstanding parish councils. If significant progress were made then the committee were of a view that it would not be necessary to meet in September, but rather convene in November 2015 for an update.

It was anticipated that all completed registers would be uploaded to the ENC website by the end of July 2015 and, from there, linked to Town and Parish Council websites. These links would be audited during the summer of 2015 and the results reported to the next meeting of the committee.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that since the previous meeting, 13 enquiries relating to standards issues had been received and one new complaint relating to a Parish Council had been received.

Fourteen town and parish councils had notified the Monitoring Officer that they had adopted the revised 2014 Code of Conduct.

A joint training session on the standards regimen and essential skills for being a successful Town or Parish Councillor had taken place on 18 May 2015, at which 41 councillors and clerks had attended. A Constitution, Standards and Legislation training session had also been held for district councillors on 14 May 2015, which had been attended by 19 councillors. This had been repeated on 29 June and by the date of the committee meeting 27 councillors in total had undertaken the training. Individual tuition would be provided to the remaining councillors who had not attended training.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Monitoring Officer update the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Independent Person on the progress made by September 2015 in receipting Register of Interest forms from parish councillors.

Chairman