236. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Mercer and Robert Tyman (Raunds Town Council).

237. **WELCOME TO BABS MORRIS**

The Chairman welcomed Babs Morris, Interim Monitoring Officer, to her first meeting of the Committee.

238. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Complaints Committee held on 17 July 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

239. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman invited those who wished to do so to declare interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

240. **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3**

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.
241. **REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

No requests for dispensations had been made.

242. **ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided a brief update on Monitoring Officer activity covering the period from the last meeting of the Committee on 17 July 2019.

There had been no new complaints received since the last meeting of the Committee, however 12 cases were ongoing, all of which were out for investigation.

It was noted that there had been some concern regarding the timescales for investigation and the Monitoring Officer reiterated the process within the Constitution. As a guide, in the MO's experience a relatively simply and quick investigation could take 3 months, however a more complicated investigation involving a number of witnesses could take up to 12 months.

It was reported that no structured training sessions had been delivered since the last meeting, however ad hoc advice had been given to both Members and Town and Parish Councils.

The Council’s new Monitoring Officer, Bhupinder Gill, was expected to be in post during November. It was also reported that two councillors had recently resigned, Pam Whiting and Anna Sauntson and that District By-Elections were likely to be held in December 2019.

Regarding the Future Standards Regime, it was noted that no further progress had been made from central government to date.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report in terms of monitoring of complaint activity be noted;

*(Reason: to demonstrate active monitoring of the local ethical standards position)*.

243. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the first annual report of the Committee.

The following points were noted:-

i) That it was good practice for annual reports to be produced as part of the standards regime;

ii) That one amendment would need to be made to the report regarding the membership of the Committee; it having recently reduced by one member, with Cllr Lance Jones having moved from the Conservative to the Independent Group;

iii) That there continued to be a town and parish councillor vacancy on the committee.

iv) That the report should be amended at section 5.1 of the report, to refer to a cemetery plot, rather than an allotment space.
RESOLVED:

1) That the Annual report be approved, subject to the amendments noted above.

2) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to advertise the Town and Parish Council vacancy on the Committee.

244. UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE AT EASTON ON THE HILL PARISH COUNCIL

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report updating the Committee on progress of the Action Plan arising from the Review of Governance at Easton on the Hill Parish Council, which was commissioned following a number of Councillor Code of Conduct complaints in 2017/18.

A revised appendix was circulated at the meeting to reflect a review of the RAG ratings undertaken and proposed by the Chairman and Independent Person, for review by the Committee.

The MO clarified in para 2.1 of the report that all five of the complaints were now out to investigation.

The Committee noted that good progress was now being made, with a new chairman and parish clerk in position. It was also noted that Easton on the Hill Parish Council had considered the matter at its parish council meeting held on Monday 14 October.

Members expressed the importance of the Parish Council maintaining its good progress in meeting the recommendations of the Action Plan, as part of the revised timetable.

RESOLVED:

1) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to write to Easton on the Hill Parish Council:

(a) Recognising that it will not be possible for it to produce the additional 9 month update, as previously requested, and the circumstances prevailing at Easton on the Hill and exceptionally defers the requested governance review response.

(b) Requesting a report from Easton on the Hill after 12 months (to be received by the end of September) followed by a further updated an final report after 15 months (by the end of December 19).

(c) Requesting the 12 month report should include the additional information around who is responsible for taking the proposed actions and when, together with details of the outcomes / changes achieved by the work to date previously requested.

(d) Conveying the expectation that all recommendations will be implemented by the 15 month report in order to show value for money in the investment of tax-payers money in carrying out the governance review.

(Reason: To provide further reassurance on the Parish Council’s progress in implementing the recommendations of the Governance Review carried out at this council.)
2) That when available, the Deputy Monitoring Officer be requested to circulate the minutes of the meeting of Easton on the Hill Parish Council held on 14 October 2019, to all members of the Committee.

(Reason: For information purposes)

Chairman