JOINT STANDARDS COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Date: 14 October 2020
Venue: Online meeting
Time: 7.30pm
Present: East Northamptonshire Councillors:
Gill Mercer  Roger Powell
Andy Mercer  Robin Underwood

Town and Parish Councillors:
Dave Munday (Stanwick Parish Council)
Nigel Rudd (Warmington Parish Council)
Adrian Winkle (Irhlingborough Town Council)
Vivienne Barnard (Independent Member)
Andrew Sortwell (Reserve Independent Member)

196. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lance Jones.

197. MINUTES
The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Complaints Committee held on 15 July 2020 were approved as an accurate record, to be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

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

No declarations of interest were made.

199. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3
There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

200. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS
The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that there had been no requests for dispensations made in advance of the meeting.
201. **ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer submitted a report providing a brief update on Monitoring Officer activity covering the period from the last meeting of the Committee on 15 July 2020.

During discussion it was noted that:-

i) Since the last report there had been two new Code of Conduct complaints. Of the current complaints, one was currently at the Hearing stage; with the others awaiting final investigation reports;

ii) The Local Government Association had received over 1600 responses to its consultation on the national model code of conduct. A further consultation was expected after 27 October, with it being hoped that a new model code would be available for authorities to consider adopting by the end of 2020;

iii) No nominations had been received from town and parish councils for its vacant seat on the committee. On the basis there was only one further scheduled meeting of the Committee prior to the 1 April Vesting Day, it was considered unnecessary to re-advertise the position.

**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.)*

202. **COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE (CSPL) REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS – RESPONSE TO JANUARY 2019 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer submitted a report which invited members’ comments on the CSPL recommendations made in their January 2019 report on local government ethical standards.

It was noted that in January 2019 the CSPL had identified some best practice recommendations which represent a benchmark for ethical practice and which they expected any local authority should implement. This latest consultation was to ask for progress against the recommendations.

Arising from discussion, the following comments were made:-

i) It was noted that the level of detail provided by each local authority on its website in respect of code of Conduct complaints was different. It was likely that best practice would be issued in this respect.

ii) Best Practice 11 referred to formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk being made by the chair or by the parish council as a whole, rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances. It was clarified that this was only in respect of making a complaint, rather than its investigation which would continue in law to be the responsibility of the principal authority, i.e. East Northamptonshire Council until 1 April 2021 and North Northamptonshire Council thereafter. Following a query, the Deputy Monitoring Officer undertook to double check whether any such complaints had been made over the last two years;
RESOLVED:

That the responses as contained in Appendix B to the report be approved and be submitted, following consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, by the Monitoring Officer to the CSPL at the appropriate time.

(Reason: To provide the Council’s response to the CSPL document.)

Chairman