

Meeting	Joint Standards Committee
Date	10 September 2014
Present	Councillor Runciman (Chair) (CYC Member) Councillor Martin (Vice-Chair) (Parish Council Member) Councillor Horton (CYC Member) Councillor Simpson (Parish Council Member) Councillor Taylor (CYC Member)
In attendance	Mr Laverick (Independent Person)
Apologies	Councillor Barton, Councillor Crawford and Mr Hall (Independent Person)

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**1. Appointment of Chair**

Resolved: That Councillor Runciman be appointed as Chair of the Joint Standards Committee.

**2. Appointment of Vice-Chair**

Resolved: That Councillor Martin be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Joint Standards Committee.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

**4. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Committee held on 29 April 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **5. Public Participation**

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

## **6. Review of Complaints for the last Municipal Year**

Consideration was given to a report which provided an overview of the standards complaints received during the previous municipal year and which reminded Members of some of the processes they had agreed for handling complaints.

Members noted that one case remained ongoing. The Monitoring Officer explained the reasons for this.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That, once the outstanding case referred to in the report had been concluded, the Monitoring Officer be asked to review the reasons why the investigation had been prolonged to see whether any lessons can be learnt for the future.

Reason: To ensure the Committee continues to make an effective contribution to ethical standards within the City Council.

## **7. Monitoring Report in Respect of Complaints Received**

The Monitoring Officer gave a verbal report in respect of complaints that had been received.

Members were informed that three complaints had been received since the last meeting. One was being investigated, one had been withdrawn by the complainant and the third was a new complaint which was still being assessed.

Resolved: That the update on complaints received be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee is kept updated on complaints received.

## 8. Revised Hearing Procedure

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval to new procedures for hearings in respect of Standards cases.

Members noted the more inquisitorial nature of the procedures and agreed that the revised procedures were less complex than previously and brought greater clarity to the process.

Members made the following comments regarding the procedures:

- The wording "*or with the permission of the Panel*" should be deleted from paragraph 6 of the Hearing Procedure. Whilst Members agreed that the procedure should attempt to give reassurance that representation was unlikely to be necessary, it was important that the procedures did not deter either party from being represented should they so wish.
- Whilst Members recognised that there may be practical reasons for limiting the number of witnesses, for example to prevent repetitious submissions or to avoid focussing on issues which were not in dispute, the expectation would be that a commonsense approach would prevail. It was important to ensure that parties felt that they had had a fair hearing.
- Greater clarity in the wording of paragraph 3 of the Pre-Hearing Procedures to make clear that it would be for the Committee to determine whether any part of the hearing should be held in private and whether any documentation should be withheld from the public.

It was agreed that the suggestions would be incorporated into the procedures and emailed to members of the committee<sup>1</sup>.

- Resolved: (i) That, subject to the agreed amendments, the pre hearing and hearing procedures set out in the annexes to the report be approved.
- (ii) That the procedures be reviewed after the next Hearing Committee meeting.

- Reasons: (i) To ensure that the Committee has published processes which allow for the fair and efficient handling of hearings.

- (ii) To ascertain whether any further amendments are required to the procedures.

Action Required

1. Update procedures for circulation

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**9. Review of Work Plan**

Members were asked to review the Committee's work plan and suggest items for consideration at future meetings.

The following suggestions were put forward:

- Inclusion of an item on Guidance in respect of Neighbourhood Plans
- Deletion of the proposed items on "Review of the Code of Conduct" and "Guidance on Hospitality", as the Committee had given consideration to these matters in the course of their work.

Resolved: That, subject the agreed amendments, the Committee's work plan be approved.

Reason: To ensure that the committee has a planned programme of work in place.

Councillor Runciman, Chair

[The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 3.30 pm].