

Meeting	Joint Standards Committee
Date	9 February 2015
Present	Councillor Runciman (Chair) (CYC Member), Councillor Martin (Vice-Chair) (Parish Council Member), Councillor Horton (CYC Member), Councillor Taylor (CYC Member), and Councillor Steward (CYC Member - Substitute for Councillor Barton)
In attendance	Mr Laverick (Independent Member)
Apologies	Councillor Barton (CYC Member), Councillor Simpson (Parish Council Member) and Mr Hall (Independent Member)

10. 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.

11. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Committee held on 10 September 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

12. Minutes of Sub-Committees

Resolved: That the following minutes of meetings of sub-committees of the Joint Standards Committee be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record:

- Assessments Sub-Committee meeting of 10 September 2014
- Assessments Sub-Committee meeting of 21 November 2014

- Assessments Sub-Committee meeting of 18 December 2014

13. Public Participation

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

14. Joint Committee Membership

Members considered a report which sought their views on future membership of the Standards Committee.

Members noted that Councillor Crawford, who had served on the Committee and its predecessor for many years, had recently retired. In May, Parish Council elections would also take place affecting both Councillors Martin and Simpson. Members agreed that it had been very beneficial to have Parish Councillors represented on the committee and they would wish this arrangement to continue.

- Resolved:
- (i) That thanks to be recorded to Councillor Don Crawford for the contribution he had made to the committee and the work that he had carried out.
 - (ii) That Members reaffirmed their commitment to full Parish Council representation on the committee.
 - (iii) That the Monitoring Officer be asked to seek nominations from the Local Councils Association for the new Municipal Year and that arrangements also be made to advise those Parish Councils who were not members of the Local Councils Association of the vacancies¹.
 - (iv) That, if nominations were received prior to the next meeting of the Committee, the nominees be invited to attend that meeting.

Reason: To ensure that the deliberations of the Joint Standards Committee reflect the circumstances of Parish as well as City Councillors.

Action Required

1. Contact YLCA

AD

15. Local and Neighbourhood Planning - Standards Issues

Members considered a report that started to identify potential ethical standards issues which may arise during the process of agreeing local and neighbourhood plans. The report was intended to prompt debate on the issue with a view to considering whether further guidance should be offered to Councillors involved in these processes and to determine whether the Committee should do more to promote high ethical standards in relation to this matter.

Members commented on the difficulties of promoting high standards of ethical conduct when neighbourhood plans were produced by groups such as neighbourhood forums whose members were not bound by statutory requirements. They suggested that consideration be given to including guidance on this matter with the information that was issued by City of York Council to groups involved in preparing such plans. Members also queried whether the code of conduct adopted by parish and town councils made suitable provision for issues arising in respect of neighbourhood planning.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Chair and Monitoring Officer request a meeting with the Chair of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association to discuss the issues raised in the report¹.

Reason: To support Members involved in local and neighbourhood planning in achieving high standards of conduct.

Action Required

1. Contact YLCA

AD

16. **Dispensations**

Consideration was given to a report which sought Members' approval to a change in the City Council's arrangements for granting dispensations.

Members noted the reasons why it was now more likely that dispensations would need to be considered, as detailed in the report, and why it may not be practicable to convene a meeting of the Joint Standards Committee to consider the matter.

Resolved: That the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be delegated powers to grant dispensations on the grounds that: *"that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation"*.

Reason: To ensure that high standards are maintained while allowing effective decision making.

17. **Local Government Association (LGA) Report**

Consideration was given to a report that advised Members of the contents of a report prepared by the Local Government Association following a recent peer review. It was noted that the Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report and had requested that a draft action plan be developed in response. The draft action plan was due to be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at their forthcoming meeting.

Members' attention was drawn to the following recommendations in the LGA report which related to the Joint Standards Committee:

- "For the Standards Committee to consider how to supplement the work of Group Leaders, whips and officers in enforcing behaviour, and also how to work with members outside the influence of whips, such as independent members. More generally for the Joint Standards Committee to review its way of working".
- "Review the Member Code of Conduct and Member/Officer Protocol; including access to officers". It was noted that it was proposed that the protocol be reviewed by a cross party group.

Members agreed that, in order for the issues identified in the LGA report to be addressed, there needed to be a culture change, including more collaborative ways of working, and a collective response supported by all Members. Whilst the Joint Standards Committee acknowledged its responsibilities to promote high standards of behaviour and would look to being more proactive in promoting ethical standards generally as well as considering breaches of the Code of Conduct, this had to be seen in the context of the limited sanctions that were available to it.

Members agreed:

- That the Joint Standards Committee would meet with group leaders and group whips at the start of the new municipal year to raise awareness of their particular responsibilities to model good behaviour, reaffirm and reinforce good behaviour and to challenge poor behaviour. Arrangements would also be put in place to meet with independent members who were outside the influence of whips or group leaders.
- That consideration would be given to the drawing up of a protocol on the use of social media.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

- (ii) That the Audit and Governance Committee be notified of the proposed actions that the Joint Standards Committee would be taking to address those issues identified in the LGA review which fell within its remit.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee makes a positive contribution to the development of high ethical standards in the Council.

18. Monitoring Report in respect of complaints received

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

Resolved: That the update on complaints received and the progress in investigating the complaints be noted.

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

19. Review of Work Plan

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

Resolved: That the Committee's work plan be approved.

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

Chair

[The meeting started at 3.15 pm and finished at 4.05 pm].