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Meeting	Joint Standards Committee
Date	19 February 2014
Present	Councillor Runciman (Chair) (CYC Member) Councillor Crawford (Parish Councillor) Councillor Galvin (CYC Member) – Substitute for Councillor Barton Councillor Horton (CYC Member) Councillor Martin (Vice-Chair) (Parish Councillor) Councillor Simpson (Parish Councillor)
In attendance	Mr Hall (Independent Person) Mr Laverick (Independent Person)
Apologies	Councillors Barton and Taylor

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## 21. **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.

## 22. **Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Joint Standards Committee meeting held on 11 September 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 23. **Public Participation**

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

## 24. **Update on Parish Council Protocol on Parish Councillors/Employee Relations**

It was reported that there had been no further feedback from parish council representatives in respect of the Parish Council Protocol on Parish Councillors/Employee Relations (minute 18 of the meeting of 11 September 2013 refers).

## **25. Guidance on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Consideration was given to a report which presented recently revised guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. The guidance - "Openness and transparency on personal interests" was included as an annex to the report.

Members were asked to consider whether any changes were necessary to the existing City or Parish Codes in light of the guidance.

Members discussed issues that had arisen for some Parish Councils regarding the declaring of interests in respect of planning issues, including the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans. Whilst it was acknowledged that the declaring of interests in respect of spouses and civil partners was required, clarification was sought as to whether councillors should declare an interest if this related to a member of their extended family. Members were advised that note would need to be taken of the Code of Conduct adopted by the parish council but the general advice was to be open and transparent and declare any such interest. A decision could then be taken as to whether the interest was prejudicial.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That no changes be made to the City or Parish Codes.

Reasons: (i) To ensure that Members are aware of the recent guidance and are satisfied that current arrangements are consistent with them.

(ii) Members were satisfied that the existing Codes of Conduct complied with the guidance on Openness and Transparency on Personal Interests.

## **26. Meeting of Standards Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Independent Persons**

Members considered a report that gave details of a recent meeting between North Yorkshire and York Standards

Committee Chairs, Independent Persons and Monitoring Officers.

Members were asked to identify any issues arising from the meeting which the Committee may wish to pursue. It was noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the delivery of training on the Codes of Conduct.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To enable the committee to benefit from the sharing of good practice with other authorities.

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

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

- (i) A complaint about a parish councillor had been investigated by a member of the legal team at City of York Council. The draft report had been shared with the parties for their observations.
- (ii) A complaint had been made against a City of York Councillor by other City of York Councillors. An independent investigator had determined that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct. Having consulted the Independent Person, and in line with the procedures put in place by the Committee, the Monitoring Officer had confirmed that the matter was closed.
- (iii) A complaint had been made by a member of the public against a City of York Councillor regarding a planning issue. The Monitoring Officer had concurred with the advice of the Independent Persons that the complaint did not disclose a potential breach of the Code requiring investigation.
- (iv) A complaint had been made against three Parish Councillors. The complaint had been investigated by the former Chair of the Standards Committee. It had been determined that there had no breach of the Code of Conduct by two of the parish councillors but that the third had breached the Code. It had not been possible for a

local settlement to be agreed and hence a meeting of the Hearings Committee would be convened.

Resolved: That the update on complaints received be noted.

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

## **28. Review of Work Plan**

Consideration was given to the committee's work plan. Members were asked to identify any items they would wish to see included on the work plan.

It was agreed that, as local and parliamentary elections were due to be held in 2015, it would be appropriate for the committee to consider issues in respect of electoral probity.

It was noted that some issues had arisen for Parish Councils in respect of the drawing up of neighbourhood plans. Mr Hall offered to provide points of contact to assist in this process. This information would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

Resolved: That the committee's work plan be approved subject to the inclusion of an item on electoral probity and further consideration of the issue relating to neighbourhood plans.

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 3.50 pm.