

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 9TH JANUARY 2014 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. A. Bullivant (Vice-Chairman), B. T. Cooper,
C. M. McDonald, C. J. Spencer and L. J. Turner

Parish Councils' Representatives: Mr. I. A. Hodgetts and Mrs. K. May
(substituting for Mr. J. Cypher)

Observer: Mr. E. M. Nock (Independent Person)

Officers: Mrs. C. Felton and Ms. D. Parker-Jones

18/13 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. W. P. Booth, S. J. Dudley and M. A. Sherrey, and from Mr. J. Cypher (Parish Councils' Representative).

19/13 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

20/13 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 10th October 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

21/13 **MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Monitoring Officer (MO) introduced her report.

Members noted that two complaints had been received against councillors (one district and one parish) during the period October to December 2013, both of which were currently being dealt with by the MO.

Regarding Member training, the MO advised that the training topics detailed in the report had been agreed by the Member Development Steering Group.

Two dates in late January had been identified for Chairmanship Skills training and Officers were currently liaising with the relevant Members to ascertain the best date for this. The chairmen and vice-chairmen of the Council's

committees/boards would be included in the training but not necessarily the scrutiny task group chairmen. The training was to be provided by an external trainer and would be tailored to the specific needs of the Council.

One of the Parish Councils' Representatives recommended an external trainer for possible future training. The MO responded that she was shortly due to speak with the trainer in question on a separate matter.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the additional information provided by the Monitoring Officer at the meeting be noted.

22/13 **PARISH COUNCILS' REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT**

Mrs. May advised that the Parish Councils had now received the Council Tax support grant payments from the District Council, which had been gratefully received.

RESOLVED that the position be noted.

23/13 **LOCALISM ACT 2011 - STANDARDS REGIME - DISPENSATIONS**

The Committee was asked to consider the granting of a number of general dispensations under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011, to enable Members to participate and vote in certain matters as detailed in the report.

The Monitoring Officer (MO) explained the background to the proposed dispensations and highlighted the suggested caveat to the dispensations set out at paragraph 3.9 of the report. The caveat suggested that if the Committee granted the dispensations they might do so on the basis that each time a Member wished to exercise an exemption, the Member first discuss with the MO the matter under consideration to ensure that the dispensation was appropriate in the context of the decision being taken.

RESOLVED

- (a) that subject to the caveat detailed at paragraph 3.9 of the report, requiring that Members wishing to exercise exemption first discuss the matter under consideration with the Monitoring Officer to ensure that dispensation was appropriate in the context of the decision being taken, dispensations under Section 33 (2) of the Localism Act 2011 to allow the Members listed in the table below to participate and vote at Council and committee meetings be granted; and

Member(s)	Relevant DPI	Reason for dispensation
Cllr Sean Shannon and Cllr Elaine Shannon	Director of BHI (Bromsgrove Housing Initiatives) / spouse of Director of BHI	To allow participation in debates concerning housing issues; it is considered that it would be in the interests of the public to allow Members with knowledge of housing issues to

		contribute to any relevant debates.
Cllr Margaret Buxton, Cllr Rory Shannon, Cllr Luke Mallett and Cllr Chris Bloore	Officer for Unison or spouse/partner to officer for Unison	To allow participation in debates concerning employment / staffing issues in relation to the authority.
Cllr Del Booth, Cllr Margaret Sherrey, Cllr Roy Clarke, Cllr Rod Laight, Cllr Peter Lammas and Cllr John Ruck	The Artrix Holding Trust (Bromsgrove Arts Development Trust)	To allow participation in debates concerning the Artrix theatre generally but not in relation to funding issues.
Cllr Jonathan Boulter, Cllr Janice Boswell, Cllr James Brogan, Cllr June Griffiths and Cllr Caroline Spencer	The Artrix Operating Trust (Bromsgrove Arts Centre Trust)	To allow participation in debates concerning the Artrix Theatre generally but not in relation to funding issues.
Cllr Luke Mallett	Employee of the British Heart Foundation	To allow participation in debates or decisions regarding health improvement or public health and well-being generally.
Cllr James Brogan and Cllr Jonathan Boulter	Employees of Health Trusts	As above

- (b) that the dispensation referred to at (a) above be valid until the first Standards Committee meeting after the District Council elections in 2015.

24/13 **REVIEW OF LOCAL PROTOCOL ON RELATIONS BETWEEN MEMBERS AND MEMBER-OFFICER PROTOCOL**

As part of the Standards Committee's Terms of Reference under the Council's Constitution Members reviewed the Local Protocol on Relations between Members and the Member-Officer Protocol. The Protocols outlined general guiding principles relating to Member-Member and Member-Officer relations and conduct.

The Monitoring Officer (MO) stated that Members had been largely responsible for drafting and updating the Protocols over the years, and that she had been granted delegated authority to make any required minor amendments to the Protocols.

The Committee felt that it was important for Members to adhere to the principles outlined in the Protocols and for Members to act in a way that secured public confidence in local government. The MO added that complaints against Members for alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct were dealt with under the separate agreed Arrangements for Managing Standards Complaints under the Localism Act 2011.

Members did not feel that any significant changes were required to the Protocols. Where references appeared in the Protocols to defunct organisations such as the Standards Board for England it was noted that the MO would make the necessary amendments under delegated authority. It was further agreed that the wording of point 4.3 of the Member-Officer Protocol be amended by the MO to state that Officers should generally be addressed as “Mr. XX” or “Mrs. XX”, as it was felt there might be occasion where the use of alternative titles such as Ms or Miss might be appropriate.

RESOLVED that subject to the minor amendments to be made by the Monitoring Officer under delegated authority, as detailed in the preamble above, the Local Protocol on Relations between Members and the Member-Officer Protocol remain unchanged.

25/13 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Monitoring Officer (MO) advised Members that the Group Leaders were currently undertaking a Constitutional Review, which would involve looking at all aspects of the Constitution. She added that this might impact on the Annual Review of the Operation of the Standards Committee item scheduled for the 3rd April 2014 meeting of the Committee, which the MO undertook to keep the Chairman of the Committee apprised of.

RESOLVED that the update provided by the Monitoring Officer, as detailed in the preamble above, be noted and the Work Programme approved.

The meeting closed at 6.25 p.m.

Chairman