

WEST DEVON STANDARDS COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Standards Committee** held on **Tuesday, 20th October, 2015 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Leech
Vice Chairman Cllr Sheldon

Cllr Ball
Cllr Kimber
Cllr Musgrave

Cllr Evans
Cllr McInnes
Cllr Yelland

In attendance:

Councillors:

Officers:
Monitoring Officer

5. **Apologies for absence**

*SC 5

An apology for absence was received from Cllr J B Moody.

6. **Confirmation of Minutes**

*SC 6

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 July 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

7. **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

SC 7

The Chairman informed that he had agreed for one item of urgent business to be raised at this meeting. This item related to consideration of the re-appointment of the Council's Independent Persons.

The Monitoring Officer proceeded to advise that it was now necessary to re-consider the issue of formally appointing our Independent Persons to support the standards process.

For the purposes of continuity, and the fact that they were experienced and provided invaluable support to her, the Monitoring Officer hoped that Members would be minded to recommend to the Council that the three existing Independent Persons (Mr George Barnicott, Mr Martin Gleed and Mrs Victoria Spence) be re-appointed for the period until the Annual Council meeting in May 2019.

In the ensuing discussion, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that this did not commit the Independent Persons to remaining in the role for that period, as they may resign (should they so wish), nor does this commitment prevent the Council from reviewing the situation in the future.

It was then:

RECOMMENDED

That the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to re-appoint the Council's three Independent Persons: Mr George Barnicott, Mr Martin Gleed and Mrs Victoria Spence for the period up to the Annual Council meeting in May 2019.

8. **Options for the Future of the Standards Committee**

SC 8

The Committee considered a report that suggested a range of alternative options for the future of the Council's ethical governance. In so doing, the report also summarised and compared how other Councils were currently set up to consider ethical governance.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the number of standards complaints made so far this year. The Committee was informed that the Council had received five formal complaints to date this year;
- (b) the range of alternative future options. Of the range of options, it was apparent that the two most popular amongst the Committee were as follows:-
 - That the Standards Committee be retained, with one formal meeting scheduled each year (additional meetings could be called as necessary); and
 - That the Standards Committee be retained, with meetings only being scheduled as and when required.

On balance, the Committee was swayed by the significance of public perception and was therefore of the view that the first option

should be endorsed whereby one formal meeting should be scheduled each Municipal Year;

- (c) the size of the Committee. Whilst reviewing the future of the Committee, Members felt it to be timely to consider its membership size. In conclusion, the majority of Members felt that the Committee should be reduced in size from 9 to 5. It was felt that this would send a clear message to the community that the Council was always reviewing its processes and governance to ensure that they were as efficient and streamlined as possible.

It was then:

RECOMMENDED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** that, with effect from the 2016/17 Municipal Year:-

1. one Standards Committee meeting should be formally scheduled each year (with the ability being retained to call other meetings as and when deemed necessary); and
2. the membership of the Standards Committee be reduced from nine to five.

The Meeting concluded at 2.35 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
