

At a Meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, **TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **12th** day of **JUNE 2012** at **10.00 am**.

Present: Mrs V Spence – Chairman
Mr A F Leech Miss D E Moyse

Parish Council: Mrs W Eldridge Mrs M Morgan

Solicitor (Mrs B Fowlds SHDC)
Committee & Ombudsman Link Officer

SC 1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th January 2012, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

***SC 2 NEW CODE OF CONDUCT AND RELATED ARRANGEMENTS**

Arising from Minute No S 16 – 2011/2012, the Monitoring Officer presented a report (page 7 to the Agenda) advising that all local authorities were required to adopt a new code of conduct with related procedures to support the work of Standards Committees following the dissolution of the Standards for England regime.

All the relevant local authorities in Devon, including the Dartmoor National Park Authority and the two Unitary Councils, had agreed to work together to produce a suggested Code of Conduct and this was presented at Appendix A to report (page 12 to the Agenda). Appendix B to the report (page 20 to the Agenda) set out in table format the issues for consideration, commentary and advice and suggested recommendations for each local authority to understand and approve. It was being proposed that both appendices be circulated to the Town and Parish Councils as they have the opportunity of adopting the suggested standards regime or of creating their own regime.

It was understood at the time of writing the report that the Regulations pending publication from the Government would allow a certain amount of leeway time to allow the new regulations to be introduced whilst maintaining the current arrangements; although clearly understanding that the new regulations needed to be adopted as close to 1st July 2012, as was reasonably practicable. Subsequently, the Government announced on Friday 8th June 2012, in an e-mail received at 5.30 pm, that all relevant local authorities must have a suitable standards regime in place by 1st July 2012.

In its deliberations, the Committee resolved to undertake a consultation with the Town and Parish Councils and to use the results of that consultation for recommendations to Council, however, following publication of the Government's Regulations, the Committee's resolution had been superceded by a requirement to hold an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to adopt and to have in place a new code of conduct by 1st

July 2012. In adopting a new Code of Conduct at such short notice, the Council would be able to review the Code at a later date to take account of local conditions and the views and comments of the Parish and Town Councils.

SC 3 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2011/2012

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the Standards Committee's Annual Report (page 28 to the Agenda) with a recommendation for the Council to note its contents. The report covered the period 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012 and was presented as Appendix A to the report (page 30 to the Agenda). The Annual Report showed that the Committee had received 8 complaints (1 for the Borough Council and 7 for Parish Councils) of which 2 had been resolved, 4 were awaiting final investigation reports and 2 requiring no further action, the training undertaken by the Committee and the business considered at its regular meetings.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the Standards Committee's Annual Report as presented be approved and adopted by the Council.

SC 4 MONITORING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2011 – 2012

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the sixth Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer (page 36 to the Agenda). The presentation of such a report to the Standards Committee and to the Council is considered to be best practice and is recommended by the Council's auditors. The Monitoring Officer's report, presented as Appendix A to the report (page 38 to the Agenda), detailed the Officer's activities in terms of Decision Making, Conduct and Standards and the Council's Constitution.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the report be approved and adopted by the Council.

***SC 5 OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER 2011 – 2012**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report (page 43 to the Agenda) on the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2011 – 2012. The Annual Letter with statistical information was presented as Appendix A to the report (page 46 to the Agenda). The Committee was advised that the Ombudsman required enquiry letters to be responded to within 28 days and the Council's Ombudsman Link Officer was congratulated in achieving an average turnaround time of 15 days. During the year 8 complaints had been investigated by the Ombudsman of which 3 gave insufficient evidence of fault, 4 offered no or insufficient evidence of fault and 1 was settled locally during the investigation period.

It was **RESOLVED** that the content of the Local Government Ombudsman's annual letter for 2011 – 2012 be noted.

***SC 6**

APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATIONS FROM SOUTH TAWTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report (page 53 to the Agenda) on a request received from South Tawton Parish Council for dispensation to enable nine of the 10 Parish Councillors for South Tawton Parish to vote and to speak on matters relating to South Zeal Victory Hall.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors W Cann, C Coombs, C Critcher, Mrs J Jecks, A T Sampson, M Watkins, A R White, Mrs J M White and B Woolland be each granted a dispensation to both speak and vote on matters relating to the Victory Hall in South Zeal until 1st July. 2012.

(The Meeting terminated at 11.32 am.)