

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON
TUESDAY 12 JUNE, 2012 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:

Betteridge, Mr. R. (Chairman), Independent Member
King, Mr. M. (Vice Chairman), Independent Member

Councillors:

Lovell, A.	Spicer, Mrs. A.
Molineux, G.N.	Sutherland, M.
Rowley, J.	Todd, R.
Chapman, Mrs. J.	Independent Member
Freeman, Miss M.	Bridgtown Parish Council
Truville, R.	Brindley Heath Parish Council
Allen, Mrs. M.	Cannock Wood Parish Council
Pearson, A.	Hednesford Town Council
Bernard, J.	Norton Canes Parish Council
Williams, Mrs. P.	Rugeley Town Council

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J. Toth.
Apologies were also received from Mr. M. Elliott and Mr. G. Sindrey, Independent Members; Councillor P. Fisher, Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council; and Councillor L. Bullock, Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Parish Council.

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No declarations were made in addition to those already confirmed in the Register of Members' Interests.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April, 2012 be approved as a correct record.

4. New Standards Regime

Consideration was given to the Report of the Monitoring Officer (Enclosure 4.1 – 4.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Mr. Welch, Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer advised Members that, further to his previous

report to the Standards Committee of 30 April, 2012, the final regulations relating to the implementation of a new standards regime had been laid before Parliament on 8 June (and he had not had sight of a copy until 11 June, 2012), in spite of the fact that the requirements took effect from 1 July, 2012.

The Monitoring Officer worked through the proposed draft Code of Conduct for Members, which had been based, so far as was practicable, on the existing Code in order that current training and guidance remained largely relevant, as adapted to meet the requirements of the Localism Act. He also advised that, while the section on disclosable pecuniary interests did not form part of the Code, it had been included for completeness and to ensure that Members had a source for reference.

Members noted the draft Code, and expressed concern at the lack of sanctions, but agreed to recommend it to Council.

The Monitoring Officer then worked through the proposed terms of reference for the new Standards Committee, and advised that, whilst the new Committee would no longer include Independent Members, Town / Parish could still attend. However, their status would be dependent on whether or not they adopted the Council's Code of Conduct. In order for all the Town / Parish Councils to have full membership, i.e. with voting rights, they would all need to adopt the Council's Code of Conduct. If they did not all do so, then none of them would have voting rights, though they would all still be able to attend meetings of the Committee.

Members agreed that the Committee's recommendation to Council should be that the Parish / Town Councils be invited to adopt the Council's Code of Conduct and participate in the Council's new Standards regime. Members also expressed concern at the rushed manner in which the new regime was being forced through, and suggested that a 12 month review period should also be recommended to Council.

The Monitoring Officer also took Members through the draft Complaints Procedure and the draft Dispensations Procedure, which were noted, and approved for recommendation to Council.

5. Appointment of Independent Persons to Standards Committee

The Monitoring Officer advised that the regulations had been amended such that the previous restrictions preventing an Independent person already serving on the Standards Committee from qualifying to be an Independent Person no longer applied provided they were not Independent Members as at 1 July, 2012. Accordingly, it was agreed that the current Independent Members would effectively resign their positions as at the close of the meeting (or with effect from 30 June, 2012, in the event that another meeting was required to be called before the introduction of the new Standards Regime).

The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Council should appoint two people: one as the Independent Person; the second as a Reserve Independent Person, in the event that the first Independent was unable to act, or conflicted, in a particular situation. This was agreed.

Members also requested that the Monitoring Officer should write, on behalf of the Council, to the Independent Members to express the Council's gratitude for their assistance over the years.

(The meeting finished at 5.15 pm.)

CHAIRMAN