

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON**  
**MONDAY 30 APRIL, 2012 AT 4.00 P.M.**  
**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 1**

PRESENT:

Betteridge, Mr. R. (Chairman), Independent Member

Councillors:

Grocott, M.R.	Rowley, J.
Holder, M.J.	Spicer, Mrs. A.
Elliott, M.	Independent Member
Sindrey, G.	Independent Member
Freeman, Miss M.	Bridgtown Parish Council
Allen, Mrs. M.	Cannock Wood Parish Council
Pearson, A.	Hednesford Town Council
Bernard, J.	Norton Canes Parish Council

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Burnett, R. Jones and J. Toth. Apologies were also received from Mr. M. King, Independent Member (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. J. Chapman, Independent Member, Councillor R. Turville, Brindley Heath Parish Council, Councillor L. Bullock, Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Parish Council and Councillor P. Williams, Rugeley Town 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 5 March, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

**4. New Code of Conduct**

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 that under the Localism Act 2011

The Standards Board had been abolished and changes to the provisions for the Council would need to come into effect as of 1 July, 2012; however the necessary regulations had not yet been laid with no commencement order being available. He indicated that the Standards Committee would need to meet again once regulations had been received from the Government to determine the model for the Code of Conduct which would then need to go before Council for approval.

The Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer provided information on the three models and indicated that the third model was closest to the current Code, although if this was the preferred option changes would need to be made especially in relation to Interests. Alternatively, it was suggested that the Committee could use the existing Code as a basis for the new Code; this was advantageous as guidance was readily available and training previously undertaken by Members would also be relevant. This also appeared to be the preferred choice of other Monitoring Officers who were also involved with the Code at other Authorities. Members of the Committee were asked to consider the option that they preferred as a basis for a draft being prepared for the next meeting.

He also reported that Parish/Town Councils would be expected to adopt their own Code or use the Councils as a basis for their Code. He indicated that he would offer assistance if necessary to Parish/Town Councils and reiterated the 1 July, 2012 deadline.

Members of the Committee discussed the three codes and issues around personal and prejudicial interests especially in terms of planning, however following an in-depth discussion it appeared that the general consensus was for the current Code to be adapted to take into account the requirements of the regulations.

In response to this the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer noted Members comments, and advised that the whole of the Interests section would be changed and consideration would need to be given to how the new Code would fit in with planning.

Members discussed a range of issues and in particular how a new Code would affect District Council Members who were also Members on either a Parish or Town Council. This was the case especially with planning and how the public would perceive a Member or had given their views at a Parish/Town Council meeting on an application who were also a Member of the Planning Committee at the District Council where the application would be considered.

The Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer advised that a Parish/Town Councillor providing comments in respect of an application could take a completely different view when all information was received at the District Council. However, he concurred that the public view could be different.

It was explained to the Committee that the Council were required to have in place arrangements for any breach of the Code. A Standards Committee would need to be formed and Parish/Town Councillors, an Independent person and District Councillors could be a Member of the Committee however, the rules concerning Committees would need to be followed and as a consequence neither Parish/Town Councillors nor an Independent person would be able to vote and this would also apply to hearings.

The Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer discussed the possibility of recommending that the Standards Committee had non voting advisory Parish/Town Councillors and Independent Members or whether there should be a joint Committee of District Councillors and Parish/Town Councillors where all Members could vote. The only issue for consideration was whether this could be achieved in the time available or whether it could be put forward as an option for the future and was keen to seek the views of the Committee.

The Committee discussed how an advisory role would work and issues were raised around the Code becoming political, proportionality and quorums.

It was reported that the Council would be required to appoint an Independent person; however the law currently stated that an Independent person already serving on the Standards Committee would not qualify. However, the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer advised that guidance was unclear but indicated that the Department for Communities and Local Government were trying to resolve this. Should this fail, the Council would need to advertise and recruit an Independent person.

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CHAIRMAN

(The meeting closed at 4.55 p.m.).