

DRAFT

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Governance & Audit & Standards Committee held on Friday, 17 April 2015 at 2.30 pm in Conference Room A - Civic Offices

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting which can be found at www.portsmouth.gov.uk.)

Present

Councillor Simon Boshier (in the chair)
Councillor John Ferrett
Councillor Steve Hastings
Councillor Hugh Mason
Councillor Phil Smith (deputising for Councillor Leo Madden)

Officers

Michael Lawther, Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer
Jon Bell, Director of HR, Legal & Performance
Liz Aplin, Operational Training Manager, Learning & Development

34. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Leo Madden. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Hugh Mason who arrived at 2.36pm.

35. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

**36. Councillor Training and Development (AI 3)
(TAKE IN REPORT)**

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report which was to update members on the review of the councillor training programme in light of comments made at the 13 March 2015 meeting of this committee and make recommendations for future member training and development.

During discussion, the following matters were clarified

- Members were not generally aware of the availability of e-learning and felt this was of increasing importance and that better communication of its availability would lead to more members making use of it. Members also felt it would be useful to provide refresher training to members on how to access PCC systems via the VPN system.

- With regard to whether or not training was mandatory, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that it was not possible to make it mandatory, even where it was a matter of good practice. However, if members were not trained for certain committees, then it was likely that they would not be asked to sit on them.
- Members discussed the timing of training sessions - some felt that concentrating all the training in a complete day was useful so that those who worked full time would only need to take one day off to receive training. They suggested that all the training that was strongly advisory could be concentrated in a day. Other members felt that several shorter sessions could be held as some members would find that less daunting to cope with. In general, members were content with the times the induction training was being offered with the exception of moving the start time of the evening session to a later start time if possible as they felt this would enable more members to attend.
- Members felt that the involvement of Group Leaders is vital to member training being given a higher profile and to encourage higher take-up.
- Members suggested that e learning modules could be extended to include Planning, Licensing, Employment Committee and Governance and Audit and Standards training - not to replace face to face training but as a refresher.
- Ms Aplin agreed to find out whether other councils provided interactive e-learning and also to find out whether members' learning progress could be monitored by Learning and Development so there was a record kept of who had done what with automatic certification being given.
- The Deputy Chief Executive agreed to contact Group Leaders with regard to promoting their greater involvement in member training and in communicating the availability of e-learning. He said he would try to ensure that there was a good variety of options for training and that training for those on committees where training was strongly advised would be arranged in a timely way.

RESOLVED that Members

- (1) Support an enhanced induction programme for new members and ongoing training (Appendix 1 - Elected Member Training Calendar 2015)**
- (2) Support the expectation that members (and standing deputies) receive training prior to committee membership or that appropriate records are kept to demonstrate that formal training is not required for an individual councillor**
- (3) Support improved partnership working between officers and Group Leaders regarding ongoing professional development training**

37. Review of Members' Code of Conduct and Committee Arrangements for Assessment, Investigation and Determination of Complaints (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report and appendices.

He dealt first with Appendix C - and outlined the complaints procedure and the suggested variation. Basically this was to introduce an informal filtering process having the same attendees as the current assessment sub-committee but being informal would be much quicker to arrange. He said that most of the complaints received were relatively minor and it was usually very obvious if an investigation was warranted. Although technically this would mean that the "decision" on whether or not to proceed further with the complaint would be taken by the monitoring officer, he would abide by the majority decision of the elected members - other than on occasions when as monitoring officer his view was that the matter should be formally investigated. A complainant would still be able to appeal the initial decision which would then go to a review sub-committee.

During discussion the following matters were raised

- Members agreed that the suggested informal filtering process should be introduced
- Members who had participated in sub-committee meetings said that on most occasions complaints could be resolved by an apology being made
- Members agreed to recommend to Council adoption of revised Appendix C.

The Deputy Chief Executive then advised of proposed changes to Appendix B - the complaint form. The proposal was to simplify it generally as shown and to delete the Equality Monitoring Questions (as the information collected was not used for anything). Members agreed to recommend to Council adoption of revised Appendix B.

The Deputy Chief Executive then advised the proposed changes to Appendix A - Code of Conduct for Members.

During discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- Members commented that there was no definition of "lobbying"
- Members said that item 11 under "General Obligations of Members" should be deleted as members could not defend themselves against being lobbied.
- It was agreed that the Deputy Chief Executive would meet with Councillor Hugh Mason outside the formal meeting concerning the Local Authority Code of Publicity referred to in the text.

Members agreed to recommend to full Council the adoption of Appendix A, subject to the deletion of item 11 under "General Obligations of Members" and minor changes to text and lay-out.

.....
The Deputy Chief Executive said that the changes would not take effect unless agreed by Full Council.
The Chair suggested that the Code of Conduct could form an appendix to the Standing Orders booklet.

RESOLVED that Members of the Committee agree and recommend to Council for adoption the proposed changes to

- (1) Appendix A, the Code of Conduct, subject to the deletion of item 11 under the "General Obligations of Members" and minor changes to the text and lay out.**
- (2) Appendix B, the Complaint Form**
- (3) Appendix C, the Arrangements for Assessment, Investigation and Determination of Complaints , including the procedure for the initial filtering of complaints**

The meeting concluded at 3.25pm.

Councillor Simon Boshier
Chair