

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Thursday, 30 March 2017

### PRESENT

Cllr Mrs J G Lawrence (Chairman)  
Cllr G Perham (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs Mrs A L Dodwell  
P Hollick  
K C Matthews

Cllrs N Warren  
R D Wenham

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE  
J G Jamieson

Substitutes: Cllrs D J Lawrence (In place of Mrs C F Chapman MBE)  
J N Young (In place of J G Jamieson)

Members in Attendance: Cllr R D Berry

Officers in Attendance: Mr Q Baker – AD Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)  
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer

GPC/16/33. **Minutes**

### RESOLVED

**that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 8 December 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

GPC/16/34. **Members' Interests**

None.

GPC/16/35. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

**GPC/16/36. Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

**GPC/16/37. Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

**GPC/16/38. Reordering and Indexing of the Constitution - Indication of Proposals**

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress made on re-ordering and indexing the Constitution.

Points and comments included:

- an explanation by the Chairman as to why the Constitution had arisen in its current format and, in particular, how the Constitution had been envisaged as a transitional document. A Member who had worked on drafting the Constitution also advised of the circumstances which had led to the current format being adopted.
- confirmation by the Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) that there were no changes to the substance of the document. He added that the aim of the proposed re-ordering was to bring the organisation of the Constitution in-line with the standard template modular form already adopted by the vast majority of local authorities. Those users of the re-ordered Central Bedfordshire Constitution would, therefore, find the change advantageous if they needed to refer to the constitutions of other councils. In addition, the standardisation of the order of contents would make the Central Bedfordshire Constitution far easier to use by anyone with prior experience of other councils' constitutions.
- the possible provision of a glossary at the end of the re-ordered document and the inclusion of the rules for Licensing. The Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) undertook to provide the glossary and incorporate the rules for Licensing under Part 5 of the re-ordered Constitution which would be renamed 'Codes and Protocols'.

**RESOLVED**

- 1 that the proposed re-ordered Constitution be approved;**
- 2 that the Assistant Director Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) be authorised to finalise the re-ordering of the Constitution and make**

**consequential or incidental changes to the Constitution necessary to finalise the re-ordering in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee.**

GPC/16/39. **Report on the Arrangements for Ethical Standards**

The Committee received a report which summarised the Council's ethical governance and arrangements since March 2016.

Points and comments included:

- the return rate for completed town and parish councillor register of interest forms stood at 97%. The Assistant Director Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) praised the contribution made by the Administrative Support Officer (Governance Services) in attaining this figure.
- the appointment of the then seven Independent Persons expired at the end of March 2017. The Council had, however, confirmed the extension of the appointment of four Independent Persons until September 2020. This number was sufficient to avoid any conflict of interest arising during the investigation of a complaint made under the Code of Conduct.
- the number of new complaints made under the Code of Conduct had fallen substantially in comparison with the same period in 2016 (down from 10 to 2) and was spread across two town and parish councils. This reflected the overall historic downward trend in the number of new complaints received.
- since August 2014 there had been an ongoing discussion with town and parish council Clerks on ethical matters. Such training meant that queries were dealt with at the earliest opportunity and this had helped prevent complaints developing. Members expressed their appreciation of the major contribution made by training towards the reduction in the number of Code of Conduct cases.
- with regard to the reference in paragraph 6 of the report to a list of sanctions available to the Standards Sub-Committee for application in the event of a breach of the Code of Conduct, the Committee noted that the list could actually be found in paragraph 34 of Appendix A and not paragraph 11 as was stated. Following comment on the restricted nature of the sanctions available the Chairman reminded Members that the action which could be taken by local authorities was the result of the change in rules introduced by central government.

**NOTED**

**how the Council has complied with its obligations in respect of ethical standards under the Localism Act 2011 for the five months since October 2016.**

GPC/16/40. **Review of Updates to the Constitution: January - February 2017**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Member for Corporate Resources which set out the changes made under the Monitoring Officer's delegated powers to the Council's Constitution between January and February 2017.

**NOTED**

**the changes made under the Monitoring Officer's delegated powers to maintain the Council's Constitution, as set out in Appendices A and B to the report.**

GPC/16/41. **Work Programme**

Members considered a report which set out the Committee's work programme.

Points and comments included:

- the small number of reports due to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 24 August 2017.

**RESOLVED**

- 1 that, at his discretion, the Assistant Director Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) submit his next update on the Council's arrangements for ethical standards to the General Purposes Committee on either 22 June or 26 October 2017;**
- 2 that, subject to no urgent need arising, the meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 24 August 2017 be cancelled.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 10.25 a.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....