



Epping Forest District Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE **Monday, 25th January, 2016**

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Standards Committee**, which will be held at:

Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping
on **Monday, 25th January, 2016**
at **7.30 pm** .

Glen Chipp
Chief Executive

**Democratic Services
Officer**

Gary Woodhall
The Directorate of Governance
Tel: 01992 564470
Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

G Chambers (Chairman), C P Pond (Vice-Chairman), S Kane, M McEwen, A Mitchell, C Roberts, B Rolfe, D Stallan and B Surtees

Independent Persons:

Mr P Adams, Mr D Cooper, Mr R Pratt

Parish and Town Council representatives:

Parish Councillors R Alvin, J Barber, R Morgan, J Whybrow

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Deputy Monitoring Officer) To be announced at the meeting.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

(Deputy Monitoring Officer) To report the attendance of any substitute members for the meeting.

3. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

(Deputy Monitoring Officer) To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2015.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Deputy Monitoring Officer) To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Monitoring Officer) To note that the terms of reference for the Committee is as follows:

(a) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-Opted Members;

(b) Assisting Councillors and Co-Opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;

(c) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;

(d) Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;

(e) Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and Co-Opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;

(f) Considering dispensations to Councillors and Co-Opted Members (including Parish and Town Councillors) from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;

(g) Dealing with any reports referred from or on behalf of the Monitoring Officer on any matter, including investigations relating to Councillor conduct;

(h) The exercise of (a) to (g) above in relation to the Parish Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those Parish Councils either directly or through joint arrangements from time to time agreed; and

(i) Adjudication on complaints regarding the operation of District Council protocols annexed to the Constitution.

6. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE - PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE (Pages 9 - 16)

(Monitoring Officer) To consider the attached report (STD-002-2015/16).

7. ALLEGATIONS MADE ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS

(Monitoring Officer) To consider the attached schedule showing the current position of active cases, if there are any outstanding.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

(Monitoring Officer) The calendar for 2015/16 provides for further meetings of the Committee on 25 April 2016.

9. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act indicated:

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
10	Allegations Made About the conduct of District and Parish/Town Councillors – Issues Arising	1

To resolve that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items which are confidential under Section 100(A)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972:

Agenda Item No	Subject
Nil	Nil

Paragraph 9 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution require:

- (1) All business of the Council requiring to be transacted in the presence of the press and public to be completed by 10.00 p.m. at the latest.
- (2) At the time appointed under (1) above, the Chairman shall permit the completion of debate on any item still under consideration, and at his or her discretion, any other remaining business whereupon the Council shall proceed to exclude the public and press.
- (3) Any public business remaining to be dealt with shall be deferred until after the completion of the private part of the meeting, including items submitted for report rather than decision.

Background Papers

Paragraph 8 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information (as defined in Rule 10) and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

Inspection of background papers may be arranged by contacting the officer responsible for the item.

10. ALLEGATIONS MADE ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND TOWN/PARISH COUNCILLORS - ISSUES ARISING

(Monitoring Officer) To discuss issues arising, if any, from active cases listed on the schedule for item 7.

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Standards Committee **Date:** 12 October 2015

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.05 pm

Members Present: G Chambers (Buckhurst Hill West) (Chairman), S Kane (Waltham Abbey Honey Lane), M McEwen (High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings), C P Pond (Loughton St John's) (Vice-Chairman), C Roberts (Loughton Alderton), B Rolfe (Lambourne) and B Surtees (Chipping Ongar, Greensted and Marden Ash)

Other Councillors: -

Apologies: A Mitchell and D Stallan

Officers Present: C O'Boyle (Director of Governance), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)) and G J Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

12. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that there had been no substitute Members appointed for this meeting.

13. MINUTES

The Committee noted that the possible merger of the Standards and Audit & Governance Committees was being examined again following the appointment of the Council's new Chief Internal Auditor.

Resolved:

(1) That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee, held on 13 July 2015, be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Member Code of Conduct.

15. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted its current Terms of Reference.

16. ALLEGATIONS MADE ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were two issues currently outstanding in relation to the conduct of District and Town/Parish Councillors.

The first issue concerned a complaint against a Parish Councillor and an alleged company partnership with an applicant of a planning application. The report of the Investigator had been received finding no breach of the Code of Conduct, but with a recommendation to review the advice regarding non-pecuniary interests. This had been completed and the report was the subject of the subsequent item on the agenda.

The second issue concerned the alleged bullying of staff by a Member in a local Council meeting. The assessment had been completed and the Monitoring Officer's decision had been 'Other Action'. This had consisted of a meeting with the Councillor concerned, the outcome of which was being awaited. It was hopeful that this issue would be resolved without the need for a formal investigation. The Deputy Monitoring Officer added that the Independent Member, Mr D Cooper, had been of great assistance during the assessment.

Resolved:

- (1) That the outstanding allegations made about the conduct of District and Town/Parish Councillors, and the steps taken in resolving the issues, be noted.

17. REVISIONS TO THE CODE OF MEMBER CONDUCT

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report on proposed revisions to the Code of Member Conduct.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer stated that, as part of the full review of the Council's Constitution, Officers had been considering whether the Member Code of Conduct required any amendment. It was noted that there had been no recent review in the light of operational experience, the Government had published a further report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and there had been a recommendation from a recent Standards Case proposing that the treatment of non-pecuniary interests be revised. Two areas in particular had been highlighted for review:

- (i) dealing with non-pecuniary interests (as stated above); and
- (ii) revisions to the Nolan Principles.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that the current Code of Conduct made no mention of pre-determination for non-pecuniary interests. A later version of the Model Code produced by the Public Legal Partnership had the following provision:

"Public Perception

If you have an interest which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement in the public interest, and you are present at a meeting of the Authority at which such business is to be considered or is being considered, you must:

- (i) disclose the existence and nature of the interest; and*
- (ii) withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held."*

It was proposed that this wording be included in the revised Code of Conduct to give guidance on non-pecuniary interests, and deal with the subjective assessment each

Councillor had to make on items where accusations of pre-determination could be made against them.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Deputy Monitoring Officer affirmed that the Planning Protocol gave advice to 'Dual Hatted' Councillors; the Planning Protocol was also being reviewed and would be appended to the Member Code of Conduct, along with the Guidance on Gifts and Hospitality. Pre-Disposition or Pre-Determination was now included as part of the training for Councillors (District and Local) on the Planning Protocol.

Cllr Surtees stated that 'Dual Hatted' Councillors were both a District and Local Councillor at all times and, when dealing with planning applications, the vast majority of such Councillors usually made a statement at Local Council meetings reserving the right to make a final decision on the application at a later date. Local Cllr Barber added that this was the *modus operandi* at Epping Upland Parish Council.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that it was incumbent on the Councillor to put themselves in the position of a member of the public with reasonable knowledge when assessing whether they were possibly pre-determined. The Monitoring Officer reiterated that any Councillor, Local or District, could and should seek advice if they were unsure about their position for a particular issue.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that it was not necessary for District Councillors to declare an interest as a Member of a Local Council at District Planning meetings. The Councillor was only under an obligation to declare a Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary interest where the Councillor had to leave the meeting for that item; however, Councillors could go further than the Code if they wished.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that the Nolan Principles had been reviewed, which left the original headings unchanged but did amend the descriptions of each. The revised wording had been attached as an Appendix to the report and the Committee was requested to adopt the revised Principles. The Committee agreed that the wording was clearer in the new draft of the Principles.

As mentioned earlier, the Deputy Monitoring Officer stated that the Planning Protocol and Guide to Gifts & Hospitality was being reviewed by the Constitution Working Group, and the revised versions would be submitted to this Committee for comment at its next meeting. The Committee was requested to consider if there were any further issues with the Member Code of Conduct, which required review.

In the "*Introduction and Interpretation*" section, R Pratt queried the definition of profit and gain only being that which was subject to Income Tax; the Deputy Monitoring Officer agreed to delete the rest of the sentence after "...or *benefits in kind*." R Pratt also enquired whether paragraph 6.1 could be expanded to define "...*any business of your authority*..."; however, the Monitoring Officer advised that if the wording of that section had been taken directly from the relevant Act of Parliament then it could not be amended.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that the District Council would have to adopt the revised Member Code of Conduct and the affiliated Local Councils would be encouraged to adopt it. A standard report with an adoption resolution and the revised Code would be circulated to these Local Councils. The Monitoring Officer was scheduled to attend the next meeting of the Epping Forest Joint Standards Committee and would discuss adoption of the revised Code with them. The revised Member Code of Conduct would be submitted to the Constitution Working Group for

comment, and if the Group requested further changes then the Code would be discussed by the Committee again at a later meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) That the proposed revisions to the Member Code of Conduct concerning non-Pecuniary interests and Pre-Determination be agreed;
- (2) That the revised wording of the Nolan Principles be agreed;
- (3) That the definition of "*profit or gain*" be revised to read "*...includes any payment or benefits in kind.*"
- (4) That the revised Member Code of Conduct, incorporating the amendments above, be submitted to the Constitution Working Group for consideration prior to onward recommendation to the Council for adoption; and
- (5) That the revised Member Code of Conduct be circulated to the affiliated Local Councils and the Epping Forest Joint Standards Committee inviting their adoption.

18. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that further meetings had been scheduled for 25 January 2016 and 25 April 2016 during the 2015/16 municipal year.

19. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee noted that there were no issues arising from the Allegations Made about the Conduct of District and Town/Parish Councillors which necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN

Report to the Standards Committee

Report Reference: STD-002-2015-16

Date of meeting: 25 January 2016



**Epping Forest
District Council**

**Subject: Audit & Standards Committee – Proposed
Terms of Reference**

Responsible Officer: Colleen O'Boyle (01992 564475)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To approve in principle the proposed merger of the Audit & Governance Committee and the Standards Committee;**
- (2) To consider and approve the proposed Terms of Reference for the new Audit & Standards Committee; and**
- (3) To request the Constitution Working Group to consider the necessary constitutional amendments and report to the Council accordingly.**

Report:

Merging Audit and Standards Committee

1. The main role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members. Matters around member conduct at committee level are relatively light and three of the six scheduled meetings have been cancelled in the last 18 months (9 October 2014, 8 January 2015 & 7 April 2015).
2. The Council's Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for providing independent assurance of the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and provides independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance. The Committee approves the financial statements and Annual Governance Statement and enhances public trust and confidence in the governance of the authority.
3. A number of other councils have combined audit and standards committees successfully, including Broxbourne and Harlow Councils, the main drivers for this being:
 - Low complaint activity especially as the Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to seek to resolve a complaint informally where a formal investigation is not merited; and
 - Similarities and synergies – both Committees deal with governance, probity and transparency of processes.
4. There is by law an independent person appointed by the Council who advises on standards issues but is not permitted to be a member of the committee. This requirement has been incorporated into the proposed Terms of Reference which states '*the Council is required to appoint at least one Independent person to advise on Standards relating to complaints who shall be invited to meetings in a non-voting capacity*'.
5. There is no requirement to have independent members although the Council can

appoint independent members to committees and the current Audit and Governance Committee has two independent members, and this arrangement should continue as it is line with good practice. It should be noted that Harlow District Council does not have any independent members on their Audit and Standards Committee but Broxbourne Council has an independent Chair.

6. It is important the new committee considers Standards issues at each meeting so it is proposed to have standards as a standing item on its agenda

Proposed Terms of Reference

7. The newly merged Audit and Standards Committee would have the objective of making a positive contribution to the Council's governance and control environment. The proposed terms of reference articulate the Committee's wide remit including advising and reviewing the Council's arrangements for internal audit, internal control, risk management, financial management, standards and corporate governance. The Committee also has an important role in ensuring public money is spent wisely and providing assurance to the public that the council is complying with the law, has an effective control framework in place and provides quality services in line with corporate priorities.

8. The proposed Terms of Reference for the Audit and Standards Committee (Appendix 1) draws on the experience of merging the Audit and Standards Committee at Broxbourne and Harlow Councils and is based on model Terms of Reference for local authorities as detailed in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication: Audit Committees - Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2013 Edition.

The View of the Audit & Governance Committee

9. The Audit & Governance Committee considered these proposals at its meeting held on 30 November 2015. The Committee welcomed the proposals and were in general agreement that the two Committees should merge as it would be more efficient and lead to a (albeit small) reduction in the number of Member meetings each year. It was also felt that oversight of the Council's Treasury Management function should remain with the new Committee, rather than transferring to the Resource Select Committee.

10. The Committee resolved to approve the merger of the two Committees in principle, along with the proposed Terms of Reference, and requested that the views of the Standards Committee be sought on the matter.

Conclusion

11. The Standards Committee is requested to consider the proposals and indicate if they are in agreement with the proposed merger of the two Committees. If the Committee is in favour then the proposed Terms of Reference for the new Committee is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee to consider, propose amendments if necessary, and approve.

12. Final approval for the merger of the Audit and Standards Committee will need to be sought from the Council following formal consultation with both Committees. The Constitution Working Group would be asked to review the proposed new merged Articles and report to the Council accordingly.

Proposed Terms of Reference for Epping Forest District Council Audit and Standards Committee

Statement of Purpose

1. The role of the Audit and Standards Committee is a key component of the council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial statements and provides a forum for considering ethical issues and ensuring high standards of conduct. The role of the committee is two-fold:
 - Audit - the purpose of the Committee is to provide independent assurance to the members of the adequacy of the risk management framework and internal control environment. It provides independent review of the council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal and external audit arrangements, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.
 - Standards – The Committee deals with a range of matters including issues concerning Councillor's conduct, provides advice and guidance to the Council, the Cabinet and individual Councillors and advises on the application and review of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Governance, risk and control

2. To review the council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances
3. To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account the internal audit opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.
4. To note the council's overall approach to value for money in ensuring the council is making best use of its resources.
5. To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure it is adequately addresses the risk and priorities of the council.
6. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the council.
7. To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the committee
8. To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions
9. To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.
10. To monitor the anti-fraud strategy, actions and resources.

Internal Audit

11. To approve the Internal Audit Charter
12. To approve the internal audit strategy and plan, including internal audit resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurances and any work required to place reliance upon these other sources. To approve any significant interim changes to the plan and resource requirements and make appropriate enquires of both management and the Chief Internal Auditor to determine if there any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
13. To consider regular reports from the Chief Internal Auditor which:
 - Updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work
 - Highlighting where there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions or where management has accepted a level of risk that the Chief internal Audit considers is unacceptable to the council.
 - Reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the Annual Governance Statement
14. To consider the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report:
 - The statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that supports the statement – these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit
 - The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion – these will assist the committee in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.
15. To support the development of effective communication with the Chief Internal Auditor.

External Audit and Financial Reporting

16. To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the report to those charged with governance.
17. To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.
18. To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

19. To be responsible for the appointment of the Council's external auditors and ensure it is in line with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Treasury Management

20. To be responsible for the scrutiny of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, including receiving regular reports on activities, issues and trends to support the committee's understanding of treasury management activities, risks and associated assurances.

Accountability arrangements

21. To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit functions.
22. To report to the full Council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.

Membership

23. The committee shall comprise 5 members, including 3 Councillors and 2 co-opted members. Additionally the Council is required to appoint at least 1 Independent Person to advise on Standards relating to complaints who shall be invited to meetings in a non-voting capacity.
24. Councillors serving as members of the Committee shall be appointed at the Annual Council meeting of Epping Forest District Council for a term of office of one year and shall be eligible for re-appointment for further terms of office.
25. That the seats should be allocated so they are not all drawn from one political group and are also open to councillors who are not affiliated to any political group.
26. Co-opted members shall serve for a period of 3 years from appointment. Such three year appointments shall be overlapping in terms of their expiry dates. A co-opted member may serve for a total of two such terms as of right but may be considered for two further three year terms, provided he or she is successful after open competition following public advertisement. Re-appointment for further terms shall be subject to satisfactory attendance.
27. Casual vacancies for members of the Committee who are Councillors which occur shall be filled at the next ordinary Council meeting (but not an extraordinary meeting) with a term of office expiring on the date of the next Annual Council meeting.

Standards Committee

28. Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-Opted Members.
29. Assisting Councillors and Co-Opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
30. Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct

31. Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
32. Advising, and/or censuring and/or imposing a sanction on a Councillor or Co-Opted person of a Committee (or former Councillor or Co-Opted person) of the Council.
33. To advise the Council to ensure that all members of the Council have access to training in all aspects of the Member Code of Conduct.
34. Considering dispensations to Councillors and Co-Opted Members (including Parish and Town Councillors) from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
35. Dealing with reports referred from or on behalf of the Monitoring Officer on any matter, including investigations relating to Councillor conduct.
36. The exercise of (29) to (35) above shall apply to parish councils and their members either directly or through a joint standards arrangement
37. Adjudication on complaints regarding the operation of District Council protocols annexed to the Constitution.
38. The Committee may appoint a Complaints Sub Committee to conduct any hearing into an allegation that a Member or Co-opted Member has breached the Council's Code of Conduct. The Audit and Standards Committee shall decide the membership of the subcommittee, ensuring where possible there is a minimum of three members of the Audit and Standards Committee.
39. The Complaints Sub Committee will undertake the following functions:
 - To conduct any Hearing into an allegation that a Member or Co-opted Member has breached the Council's Code of Conduct.
 - Following a hearing, make one of the following findings:
 - That the Member has not failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and no further action needs to be taken in respect of the matters considered at the hearing: or
 - That the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct but that no further action needs to be taken in respect of the matters considered at the hearing: or
 - That the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and that a sanction and/or informal resolution should be imposed. The subcommittee may impose any action or combination of actions available to it, or impose any informal resolution or combination of informal resolutions as are available to it by law or policy.
 - After making a finding, providing written notice of its findings and the reasons for its decision to the Member and complainant.

Eligibility for membership

Councillor members

40. Councillors appointed to the Audit and Standards Committee may not also be members of the Cabinet or any select committee appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with responsibility for reviewing the Council's finances or financial procedures.
41. A Portfolio Holder Assistant (other than any Assistant involved in any portfolio dealing primarily with the Council's finances) appointed by the Leader of the Council shall be eligible for appointment to the Committee.
42. Appointment of Councillors shall be made on the basis of evidence of the aptitude, experience or interest and for this purpose the normal rules for pro rata appointments shall not apply.
43. Formal attendance standards be operated in respect of the three councillor members when reappointment is under consideration by the Council's Appointments Panel and the Chairman and co-opted members of the Audit and Standards Committee be consulted informally about the appointment or reappointment of councillors at the appropriate time.

Co-opted members

44. Co-opted members, independent of the Council, shall be appointed by the Council on the basis of their professional expertise, experience and background as relevant to the role and responsibilities of the Audit and Standards Committee. Initial appointments of co-opted members and the filling of casual vacancies shall be made following public advertisement and interviews, the latter conducted in accordance with arrangements agreed by the Council. If the number of suitable applicants exceeds the number of co-opted places on the Committee, the Council shall keep a waiting list of suitable applicants should casual vacancies occur.

Chairman and Vice Chairman

45. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Audit and Standards Committee shall be appointed at the first meeting of the Committee in each Council year for a term of one year expiring on the date of the first meeting of the Committee of the next Council year.
46. Casual vacancies in the position of Chairman and Vice Chairman shall be filled in the same way as required in respect of members of the Committee (see paragraph 28 above).
47. Both Councillors and co-opted members serving on the Committee shall be eligible for appointment to the office of Chairman and Vice Chairman.
48. Where the Chairman of the Committee is a Councillor, the Vice Chairman will be appointed from among the Co-opted members. Where the Chairman is one of the Co-opted members, the Vice Chairman shall be a Councillor.
49. The Chairman and Vice Chairman shall be eligible for re-appointment.

Parish/Town Councils

50. Parish/Town Councils affiliated to the Standards Committee will be sent meeting agendas and invited to attend where appropriate.

Meetings of the Committee

51. The Committee shall meet at least three times each financial year.
52. The Committee shall be entitled to require any Member, Director, their representatives or any other officer to attend their meetings in order to discuss any matters under discussion including the annual audit programme.

Decision Making

53. Only the Councillors and co-opted members serving on the Committee shall be entitled to vote.
54. All members of the Committee shall be entitled to all documents advice and facilities relevant to their membership of the Committee, regardless of their status as either a Councillor or Co-opted member.

Other Requirements

55. All members of the Committee shall respect the confidentiality of Council information and proceedings where appropriate, particularly where exempt or confidential business is involved.
56. All co-opted members of the Committee shall be required to make a statutory registration of interests in the same form as those required of serving councillors and to be aware at all times of the requirement to clear any interest relating to their work on the Committee.
57. Members of the Committee should seek to attend all meetings of the Committee unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this.
58. All members of the Committee should ensure that they participate fully in any training designed to assist them in their responsibilities as members of the Committee. Similarly all members should act on appropriate advice and other information supplied by the Council to improve their effectiveness.