



had only met twice previously, and the Committee had only met 5 times in the last three and half years.

The Committee was reminded that it had previously accepted the implementation of the Localism Act 2012 had dramatically reduced its workload through new arrangements for dealing with allegations of Member misconduct. However, the Committee were not minded to support the proposals and expressed a number of concerns. The Committee was requested to comment on the review, prior to a report to the Constitution Working Group later in the year.

There was considerable support from the Committee for the status quo and maintaining a separate Standards Committee. The Chairman highlighted that the Standards Committee had recently encouraged Members to undertake Code of Conduct training at least once during each term of office, which was very important.

The Monitoring Officer, C O'Boyle, emphasised that the Localism Act 2012 abolished the need for a local authority to maintain a formal Standards Committee, they just required a process to deal with complaints made against Members. The proposal was to merge the two Committees, not abolish the Standards Committee. The general view was that the Council held too many Member meetings, and these two Committees were combined at many other local authorities. S Hill added that no Standards issues were ever ignored, and that Officers resolved many issues which Members were not aware of.

Cllr Kane stated that he was not against a potential merger provided there was a process in place to deal with issues, the merged Committee would have the ability to co-opt other Members to give it depth, and if it was open to public scrutiny. However, P Adams (Independent Person) felt that 90% of the problem was public perception and any merger could have the effect of hiding Standards issues as the Audit & Governance Committee was very technical. Parish Cllr J Whybrow also had concerns about the lack of Town and Parish Council involvement.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Constitution Working Group that the two Committees not be merged and that the current status quo be maintained.

**Recommended (to the Constitution Working Group):**

(1) That the current status quo of having two separate Committees for Standards issues and Audit & Governance issues be maintained, for the same reasons as outlined in January 2016 (minute 24, 25 January 2016 refers).

**13. APPOINTMENT OF A STANDARDS COMPLAINTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Monitoring Officer, C O'Boyle, presented a report on the appointment of a Standards Complaint Sub-Committee.

C O'Boyle advised the Committee that there was a need to appoint to and convene a meeting of a Complaints Sub-Committee to conduct a hearing into an allegation that a Member had breached the Council's Code of Conduct. Article 9 of the Constitution outlined the appointment of, and terms of reference for, a Complaints Sub-Committee. The complaint in this case concerned a District Council Member so there was not a requirement to appoint a Town or Parish Council representative. In addition, Article 9 also delegated authority to the Sub-Committee to determine the case in this instance without further reference to the main Standards Committee. Training would be organised for the Members of the Sub-Committee prior to the

hearing of the case, although it was suggested that all Members of the Standards Committee should attend.

Given the make-up of the Standards Committee, and the pro-rata requirements, S Hill suggested that the Sub-Committee should consist of three Members, two from the Conservative Group and one from the Loughton Residents Association, with one reserve for each Group. The Committee concurred, and agreed to appoint a Sub-Committee of three members with the suggested make-up.

The Chairman made an initial suggestion that the Sub-Committee should comprise himself as Chairman, Cllr Pond from the LRA and Cllr Avey; Cllr Avey informed the Committee that he could not guarantee his attendance during the day and therefore Cllr Rolfe was suggested as a Sub-Committee Member, with Cllr Avey as a substitute for the Conservative Group. Cllr Pond suggested Cllr Roberts as the substitute for the Loughton Residents Association, and this was agreed by the Committee.

S Hill informed the Committee that the training would be scheduled during January 2018, with the meeting of the Sub-Committee taking place as soon as possible afterwards. It was also highlighted that this particular case had taken some time to progress through of all of the preceding steps to get to this point.

**Decision:**

- (1) That three Members of the Standards Committee be appointed to the Standards Complaints Sub-Committee to hear the current outstanding case;
- (2) That the three Members of the Standards Complaints Sub-Committee be comprised of two Members of the Conservative Group and one Member of the Loughton Residents Association, plus a substitute Member for each Group;
- (3) That the following Councillors be appointed to the Standards Complaints Sub-Committee:
  - (a) Cllr Chambers (CON);
  - (b) Cllr Pond (LRA); and
  - (c) Cllr Rolfe (CON);
- (4) That Cllr Avey (CON) and Cllr Roberts (LRA) be appointed as substitutes for their Groups for the Standards Complaints Sub-Committee;
- (5) That Cllr Chambers be appointed as the Chairman of the Standards Complaints Sub-Committee;
- (6) That the Terms of Reference for the Standards Complaints Sub-Committee, as set out in Article 9 of the Constitution, be noted; and
- (7) That all Members of the Standards Committee be invited to attend the training from the Monitoring Officer for hearing a Standards Complaint, to be scheduled during January 2018.

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

The Deputy Monitoring Officer, S Hill, informed the Committee that there were 2

allegations concerning the conduct of District and Town or Parish Councillors to update the Committee on.

The Committee were reminded that, for the first allegation listed, an investigation had been completed and the Monitoring Officer had requested a Standards Complaint Sub-Committee to hear the case, which the Committee had considered earlier in the meeting. For the second allegation listed, the Monitoring Officer had determined that it was not suitable for investigation and therefore no further action should be taken on the matter.

S Hill stated that two further complaints had been received this week: for the first, Officers were seeking more information; and for the second, this was a complaint against a Town Councillor and it was in the early stages of being assessed.

**Resolved:**

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

**15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Committee noted that there had been no formal meetings of the Standards Committee scheduled during the municipal year, following the decision of the Council that the Standards Committee should only meet as and when there was business to be transacted (Council 26 April 2016, minute 12 refers).

**16. 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 Councillors which necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

**CHAIRMAN**