

5. INDEPENDENT PERSONS

The Chairman advised that this would be the last meeting of the Committee attended by Jason Guth as an Independent Person as, together with all other former Independent Members of Standards Committees, he was required to relinquish his involvement in the Committee on 30 June 2013 by virtue of Government Regulations.

The Chairman, the Monitoring Officer and Councillors Stallan and Pond paid tribute to Jason's service on the Committee.

Jason thanked members and the Monitoring Officer for their kind words.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that Kim Adams had previously been appointed as a reserve Independent Person and she asked him if he was willing to take on the full role from 1 July 2013. He confirmed that he wished to do so and thanked the Committee for allowing him to be involved during the past year in a shadow capacity.

RESOLVED:

That Kim Adams be appointed as a full Independent Person from 1 July 2013.

6. TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed parish council representatives, Councillors R Morgan and Ms J Whybrow to the meeting.

The Committee noted that Sheering and Matching Parish Councils would be represented at meetings by Councillor Morgan and Chigwell and Willingale Parish Councils by Councillor Alvin. In relation to the Roydon and Epping Upland Parish Councils, it had been suggested that Councillor Whybrow, a member of Roydon Parish Council, would alternate at each meeting with Councillor Barber, a member of the Epping Upland Parish Council. However, the Epping Upland Parish Council had indicated that they wished to have their own representative at all meetings.

Members were informed that the Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council had now stated that it wished to affiliate to this Committee and it had been suggested that as that Parish Council adjoined Willingale Parish Council it should be represented by Councillor Alvin provided that this was acceptable to the three Councils he would represent.

Members gave further consideration to Town and Parish Council non-voting representation on the Committee taking account of the possibility of further Parish and Town Councils indicating a desire to affiliate to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

(1) That for the remainder of the current municipal year the non-voting members representing the Parish Councils affiliated to this Committee be as follows:

Councillor R Morgan (representing Matching and Sheering Parish Councils);

Councillor J Barber (representing Epping Upland Parish Council);

Councillor Ms J Whybrow (representing Roydon Parish Council);

Councillor R Alvin (representing Chigwell and Willingale Parish Councils and, subject to (2) below, Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council);

(2) That agreement be sought from the Chigwell, Willingale and Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Councils to Councillor Alvin representing the Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council on the Committee as well as the other two Parish Councils; and

(3) That the Parish and Town Council non-voting representation on the Committee be reviewed at the first meeting of the Committee in the municipal year 2014/15 in the light of any additional requests for affiliation to the Committee.

7. PARISH & TOWN COUNCILS - AFFILIATION TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND ADOPTION OF CODES OF CONDUCT AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

The Monitoring Officer presented a schedule of decisions taken by Parish and Town Councils regarding Standards Committee affiliation and adoption of Codes of Conduct and Complaints Procedures.

She expressed thanks to District Council ward members, especially Councillors A Boyce and H Brady, for their assistance in achieving a high level of compliance with the requirements. She pointed out that having studied the complaints procedure adopted by the High Ongar Parish Council, it mirrored the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) model and was not one drawn up by the Parish Council itself.

The Committee noted that those Parish Councils yet to make decisions were giving active consideration to the requirements.

8. CODE OF CONDUCT, PLANNING PROTOCOL AND INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING - TRAINING

The Monitoring Officer reported that as a result of a mains drinking water pipe bursting considerable damage and disruption had been caused to a large part of the Civic Offices. She advised that as a result the training scheduled to take place on Saturday 15 June 2013 on the Code of Conduct, the Planning Protocol and an Introduction to Planning had been cancelled due to the need to test systems and move back and reconnect equipment to the affected offices following temporary relocation arrangements to other parts of the building.

The Monitoring Officer also pointed out that there had been a poor response to the invitation to attend the training. She advised that as well as the 58 District Councillors, all Members and Clerks of the 24 Parish and Town Councils had been invited to attend but only 13 Members and Clerks had signified their attendance.

The Committee discussed steps which could be taken in an attempt to achieve a better attendance when the training course was re-scheduled. Differing views were expressed on the days and times favoured for the training sessions and the formats. It was suggested that when re-advertising the course on Current Issues in Planning, emphasis should be placed on all members attending in view of the on-going preparation of the Local Plan.

The Committee was advised that the session on the Planning Protocol had been planned to be an open forum to establish concerns about the current Protocol with a

view to a revised version being prepared and considered by this Committee. The attention of the Committee was drawn to a Local Government Association/Planning Advisory Service publication "Probity in Planning for Councillors and Officers" which could be used with local amendment as the basis for a new Planning Protocol.

The Committee agreed that the Local Government Association/Planning Advisory Service document could be used as a basis for a new Planning Protocol but drew attention to matters included therein which were not acceptable.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the officers reschedule the proposed training on the Code of Conduct, the Planning Protocol and Current Issues in Planning taking account of the views expressed by members of this Committee and other councillors;

(2) That the suggestion in the Local Government Association/Planning Advisory Service document that Planning Committees before making a decision on a planning application which differs from the officer recommendation should adjourn for a few minutes to discuss the reasons for doing so be not supported and not included in any draft Planning Protocol; and

(3) That references in any draft Planning Protocol to the registration and disclosure of interests be consistent with the wording and the requirements of registration forms.

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

The Committee received a schedule regarding an allegation made about the conduct of two Parish Councillors. The Monitoring Officer reported that on 10 June 2013 the matter had been considered at a hearing arranged by the Joint Parish Standards Committee. The two members had been found in breach of the Code of Conduct and the full decision would be published on the District Council and the Nazeing Parish Council websites.

The Committee noted that with the conclusion of that complaint there were currently no outstanding formal complaints.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the Council's adopted calendar for 2013/14 provided for meetings on 12 September 2013, 12 December 2013 and 13 March 2014.

The Committee noted that additional meetings could be arranged as and when required.

11. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee agreed that there were no issues which necessitated moving into private session.

CHAIRMAN