

Conduct and the retention of external advice in respect of standards matters. Mr. Hill also advised the Committee of the arrangements for the appointment of the Monitoring Officer as part of the Council's proposed new management structure.

22. INDEPENDENT PERSONS - APPOINTMENT

The Monitoring Officer reported that, following the recent death of Mr. P. Adams, Mr. D. Cooper was now the sole Independent Person on the Standards Committee and requested members to consider whether further recruitment activity should be undertaken for the appointment of up to two additional Independent Persons to ensure support for the responsibilities of the Committee and continuity in its work.

Members were advised that the recruitment of Independent Persons had last been carried out in 2012 and that, at that time, a panel of members of the Standards Committee had been established to shortlist and interview candidates for the relevant positions. The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that the formal appointment of Independent Persons was a matter reserved to the Council and that an appropriate role profile had previously been developed to ensure that candidates were qualified to discharge the functions of the Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer requested that the Committee consider the appropriate timing of the recruitment of new Independent Persons. Members noted that the Remuneration Panel was also currently carrying a vacancy, following the resignation of an independent member earlier in the year and that it would be sensible to undertake joint recruitment activity after the Summer period, to ensure that the appointment process was representative of local communities, particularly as some restrictions applied to the position of Independent Person.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the ongoing requirement for Independent Persons to support the responsibilities of the Committee, be endorsed;**
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer undertake appropriate recruitment activity during September 2018, with a view to the appointment of two additional Independent Persons;**
- (3) That the Chairman of the Committee, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, establish a selection panel of three members of the Committee (pro-rata two members of the Conservative Group and one member of the Loughton Residents Association Group) to shortlist and interview candidates for the position of Independent Person and make recommendation for appointment to the Council, ideally at its meeting on 25 September 2018;**
- (4) That the Monitoring Officer also form part of the selection panel of established to shortlist and interview candidates for the position of Independent Person, in a voting capacity; and**
- (5) That, if possible, a further meeting of the Standards Committee be held prior to the appointment of Independent Persons by the Council, in order that candidates recommended for appointment by the selection panel have an opportunity to meet all members of the Committee.**

23. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING - UPDATE

The Monitoring Officer reported to the Committee on the current status of the training of members on the Council's Code of Conduct.

The Committee was advised that a further training session had been held on 10 July 2018 and that the attendance of five members remained outstanding during their current term of office. The Monitoring Officer reported that further member training on the Code of Conduct was due to be provided during October 2018 and that efforts would be made to secure the participation of the outstanding members at this session.

RESOLVED:

That the status of the training of members on the Code of Conduct be reviewed further by the Committee, after the additional training session to be held in October 2018.

24. CONDUCT OF DISTRICT & TOWN/PARISH COUNCILLORS - ALLEGATIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported to the Committee with regard to the receipt of new allegations concerning the conduct of District, Town or Parish Councillors and progress with regard to the investigation and assessment of such allegations.

The Committee noted that, of the outstanding allegations, the assessment of one case (Case 3/2018) had been completed and was to be issued to the Independent Person for review, and that the remaining cases (Case 4/2018 and 5/2018) were currently at various stages of the assessment process.

The Monitoring Officer reported that it had not been necessary to convene the Standards Complaint Sub-Committee appointed at the last meeting, to consider Case 1/2017, as this matter had been resolved through the identification of appropriate training. The Monitoring Officer indicated however that it was intended that the hearings process for the Sub-Committee would be reviewed by the Standards Committee later in the year.

Members were advised that the Monitoring Officer had identified a trend in the receipt of complaints concerning the conduct of District Councillors, made by officers of the Council and sought the support of the Committee in reducing the incidence of such behaviour. The Monitoring Officer advised that a separate procedure was in place for the submission of complaints concerning the conduct of officers of the Council.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the outstanding allegations made about the conduct of District, Town or Parish Councillors and the steps taken so far to assess and resolve these issues, be noted;**
- (2) That procedures for hearings undertaken by the Standards Complaint Sub-Committee be reviewed by the Standards Committee as soon as possible; and**
- (3) That the current procedure for the submission of complaints concerning the conduct of officers of the Council be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.**

25. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee noted that there were no issues arising from allegations made about the conduct of District, Town or parish Councillors that necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

26. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that no formal meetings had been scheduled during the current municipal year, following the decision of the Council at its meeting on 26 April 2016, that the Standards Committee should only meet as and when there was business to be transacted.

Members agreed that, if possible, a further meeting be held prior to the appointment of additional Independent Persons by the Council, in order that candidates recommended for appointment could have an opportunity to meet all members of the Committee.

CHAIRMAN