

Minutes of Cottenham Parish Council Standards Committee

Held in the Parish Office, Community Centre, Cottenham

On Tuesday 27th January 2015 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs Heydon, Leeks, Morris and Nicholas plus Clerk Jo Brook

- 15S/001. Appointment of Chair of the Committee** – Resolution that Cllr Morris be appointed as Chair of the Standards Committee. **RESOLVED.**
- 15S/002. Any Questions from the Public or Press – Standing orders to be suspended** – None.
- 15S/003. Standing Orders re-instated - Chairman’s Introduction and Apologies** – Cllr Morris thanked the Committee for his appointment.
- 15S/004. Declarations of Interest** *To receive disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests from Councillors on matters to be considered at the meeting.* – None.
- 15S/005. Follow up from Cllr training** – To consider lessons learned from the Councillor training sessions and any perceived need for follow-up training or mentoring – Cllr Morris ran through the syllabus. Regarding planning, Cllr Leeks pointed out that neither SCDC or the Parish follow up on conditions placed on planning applications. Part of the S106 money to District should be used for this purpose. Should we put our own system in place? Cllr Nicholas also suggested using delegation reports to learn the reasons why applications are/aren’t approved.
- 15S/006. Review the Code of Conduct** – To consider Councillor behaviour in and out of formal meetings, including use of email and any effect on our Code of Conduct – CPC adopted the NALC version of the Code in 2012. Need to look at use of email discussions and pre-disposition. Cllrs need to be aware of FOI requests and that personal email accounts could be subject to requests if used for PC business. Items that are or may become agenda items should be off limit for discussion outside of meetings. If Cllrs don’t agree with a decision they must still stand by the PC’s decision. Cllr Morris to draft addition to the Code for the next meeting.
- 15S/007. Review the Complaints procedure** – To consider its fitness for purpose and suggest independent members for possible inclusion on panels – Suggestion to add extra clauses to fill a hole in the process re. complaints about Cllrs. When required, the Standards Committee will co-opt two non-Councillor residents to form a Code of Conduct Committee to investigate complaints about actions by any Parish Councillor. Cllr Leeks said that they needed to be some form of test of the validity of a complaint i.e. that it falls under the Code. First responders get complaint, test validity with Code Committee and take a view of what should be done. Need to establish what redress the complainant expects. The Committee will make a decision whether the complaint will be taken further and the Cllr concerned is notified. Actions: need to amend response time and Clause 14 to be rewritten. Clerk to write to the 5 panel members nominated for the 2 independent places to ascertain their availability (Simon Edwards, Ruth Rogers, John Garstang, Eileen Wilson and Rick Bristow).
- 15S/008. Scrutiny Mechanisms** – To consider Council’s scrutiny mechanisms, especially in light of proposed further financial delegation to Committees – Cllr Morris outlined the requirement. Cllr Nicholas raised concerns that some items may slip through unscrutinised. We need to decide whether there is a real need for this new working party/committee and how much time would be required. All minutes are already sent to all Cllrs. In terms of payments/cheques there is already a robust process in place.
- 15S/009. Terms of Reference** – Resolution to amend Standards Committee Terms of Reference membership to 6 members including ex-officio. **RESOLVED.** NB: the situation re. ex-officio should be amended for all committees. Also need 2 more members; Clerk to add to next full Council agenda.
- 15S/010. Date of next meeting** – TBC.
- 15S/011. Close of meeting** – 8.41pm.

Signed _____ (Chair) Date _____