

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Standards Committee held at the Council Offices,
Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Monday, 18 September 2017 commencing at
2:00 pm**

Present:

Tewkesbury Borough Council
Members:

Councillor M Dean
Councillor Mrs S E Hillier-Richardson
Councillor T A Spencer
Councillor P D Surman (Vice-Chair)
Councillor M G Sztymiak
Councillor H A E Turbyfield and
Councillor M J Williams (Chair)

Non-Voting Independent Persons: Mr P J Kimber

Non-Voting Parish Representatives: Mr D J Horsfall

ST.3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 3.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.

ST.4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 4.1 An apology for absence was received from Independent Person, Mr M Jauch.

ST.5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 5.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Tewkesbury Borough Council Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council on 26 June 2012 and took effect from 1 July 2012.

- 5.2 There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

ST.6 MINUTES

- 6.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 21 March 2016, 17 May 2016, 16 May 2017 and the special meetings held on 27 June 2016 and 22 November 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

- 6.2 Referring to the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2016, a Member questioned whether the Protocol for Councillors and Officers Involved in the Planning Process was working well. In response, the Monitoring Officer indicated that the Protocol was effective as could be seen through the Planning Committee meetings. A new procedure had also been implemented which meant any new Officers who had any involvement with planning had to sign to say they had read the Protocol and would comply with it; this ensured everyone that needed to be was familiar with it.

ST.7 REVIEW OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY PROTOCOL

- 7.1 The report of the Deputy Monitoring Officer, circulated at Pages No. 13-26, put forward proposals for a review of the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Councillors and Members were asked to agree that a review take place.
- 7.2 The Monitoring Officer explained that this was the last of the Council's Protocols that needed to be reviewed. As the review of the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations had gone so well it was suggested that the same process be followed for the review of the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Councillors whereby the Committee would meet as a Working Group and talk to Members to ascertain their views on the effectiveness of the Protocol and what, if any, changes would improve it. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Chair had questioned whether a Working Group was needed for this particular review and she had responded that it would be possible for her to update the Protocol and bring back a report on the changes made but equally the Working Group scenario had worked well previously. There had never been any problem with Members not observing the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol and, although it was mostly common sense, it was felt to be necessary.
- 7.3 In terms of whether the Protocol had any 'teeth', the Monitoring Officer explained that it was an addition to the Code of Conduct. If a Councillor was in breach of the Protocol they would almost certainly also be in breach of the Code of Conduct which was where complaints could be made. The Protocol was as much for members of the public to understand how the Council dealt with gifts and hospitality as it was for Councillors to follow as it demonstrated the standards the Council adhered to. A Member felt that the Protocol provided accountability and transparency for the public and gave Councillors protection in that they could use it as a reason for refusing a gift so as not to cause offence to the person offering it. She also felt a Working Group meeting would be helpful for the similar reason in that it gave the public the comfort that the Standards Committee took the matter seriously. Another Member agreed with those views. In response to a query, the Monitoring Officer indicated that she was sometimes asked what hospitality was but, in general, Members knew what was declarable and what was not. There had not, so far, been any Code of Conduct complaints regarding gifts and hospitality.
- 7.4 Accordingly, it was
- RESOLVED** That the whole Committee meet as a Working Group, as set out in Paragraph 2 of the report, to review the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Councillors.

ST.8 SEPARATE BUSINESS

- 8.1 The Chair proposed, and it was

RESOLVED That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

ST.9 SEPARATE MINUTES

- 9.1 The separate Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March and the special meeting held on 22 November 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

ST.10 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

(Exempt –Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – Information relating to any individual)

- 10.1 The Committee considered an update report on complaints received.

The meeting closed at 2:45 pm