

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Standards Committee	From: LEGAL, MEMBER AND STATUTORY SERVICES Ask for David Roberts Ext 25562 My Ref DR Your Ref
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HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE 13 NOVEMBER 2013

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

R H Beeching, N Bell, D J Hewitt (Chairman), A Plancey, D T F Scudder

Also present; T R Morris, Independent Person

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Committee meeting on 13 November 2013 as circulated, copy annexed, decisions were reached and are recorded below:

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. STANDARDS REGIME - UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal Officer on the operation of the standards regime in Hertfordshire since the new Localism Act arrangements were implemented in July 2012, and on the latest guidance issued by the Government in September 2013.

The September 2013 Government guidance was notable in that it made reference to Trade Union membership for the first time. The Chief Legal Officer advised that Trade Union membership as such is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) as prescribed in Regulations and members are not, therefore, under a legal requirement to disclose such membership, although sponsorship or employment of a member by a Trade Union would be a DPI. The Council's code of conduct does not specifically require any interests other than those that comprise DPIs to be

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registered, although if relevant then membership of a Trade Union would need to be declared at a meeting as a Declarable Interest.

The latest guidance was helpful in reference to the involvement of Members in the annual Council Tax setting, and as a result the Chief Legal Officer advised that she would not be advising Members of the Council to seek any dispensation prior to the meeting of the Council in February 2014.

RESOLVED

The Committee requested the Chief Legal Officer to undertake a light-touch review of the Council's Code of Conduct in the light of Government Guidance and experience to date of the operation of the Localism Act standards regime and bring forward recommendations as appropriate.

3. COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Committee noted the Chief Legal Officer's report on complaints received since 1 July 2012.

Four complaints had been received and were assessed by the Chief Legal Officer in consultation with the Independent Person. In each case the complaints were rejected as it was judged that they did not amount to a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct. In each case the complainants were informed of the assessment, with reasons, and of their right to appeal. None of the complainants chose to appeal the assessment.

Kathryn Pettitt
Chief Legal Officer