

CONSTITUTION FOCUS GROUP

MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTION FOCUS GROUP MEETING HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT THE LONGLEAT ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman), Cllr Ernie Clark, Cllr Glenis Ansell, Cllr Jon Hubbard and Cllr Tony Deane

12 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Julian Johnson, Mr Paul Neale and Miss Pam Turner.

13 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2016 were presented and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

14 Review of Protocol 12: Procedure for Dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints

At its meeting on 12 July 2016 Council adopted guidance to support the Code of Conduct and also agreed the Standards Committee's recommendation to ask the Focus Group to review the procedure for dealing with complaints under the Code and report back to the Standards Committee in the first instance with advice on any proposed changes.

The Focus Group considered a report from the Monitoring Officer, setting out the number of complaints received since the current arrangements came into effect on 1 July 2012, the number of complaints which progressed to a formal review at the request of the parties, and a summary of comments received from complainants, subject members, supporting officers, councillors serving on review and hearing sub-committees and the Council's Independent Persons.

The Focus Group considered the existing arrangements as contained in Protocol 12 of the Constitution, as well as the Local Assessment Criteria for assessment of complaints and procedures for review and hearing sub-committees. Issues considered included requirements of confidentiality and

enforcement of that obligation, trivial and vexatious complaints, use of informal resolution and how the Independent Persons could support this, timescales for responses and arrangement of assessments, reviews and hearings and support for the parties.

The Focus Group discussed the documents and possible amendments. Although the language of some sections could be improved to remove ambiguity and improve awareness of procedures and available support, they were of the view the current arrangements were satisfactory, with appropriate timescales, clear rules on assessment of vexatious complaints and therefore did not feel major revisions were required at the present time.

At the conclusion of discussion,

Resolved:

To request the Monitoring Officer produce suggested clarifications, corrections and other minor alterations to Protocol 12, the Local Assessment Criteria and Procedures for Review and Hearing Sub-Committees, to be circulated to the Focus Group for comment.

15 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 3.40 - 4.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718504, e-mail kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115