

Present:	Councillor Geoff Ellis (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Councillors:	Gill Clayton-Hewson, Tony Gray, Gary Hewson (substituted for Adrianna McNulty), Ronald Hills, Ric Metcalfe and Loraine Woolley
Independent Person(s):	Roger Vine
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor Katie Vause, Councillor Adrianna McNulty, Councillor Edmund Strengiel and Chris Elkington

33. Confirmation of Minutes - 2 February 2015

The Chair further noted that, subsequent to minute no. 32, insufficient interest had been showed by local schools in taking part in an event organised to promote young people's interest in democracy. As such, the event would be deferred to a later date, noting the Reserve Independent Person's suggestion that any future event be scheduled to coincide with Local Democracy Week.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2015 be confirmed.

34. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gary Hewson declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Planning Committee Dispensation'. The councillor was a member of the Labour Party, which was the occupier of the relevant property.

Councillor Gill Clayton-Hewson declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Planning Committee Dispensation'. The councillor was a member of the Labour Party, which was the occupier of the relevant property.

Councillor Loraine Woolley declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Planning Committee Dispensation'. The councillor was a member of the Labour Party, which was the occupier of the relevant property.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Planning Committee Dispensation'. The councillor was a member of the Labour Party, which was the occupier of the relevant property.

Councillor Tony Gray declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Planning Committee Dispensation'. The councillor was a member of the Labour Party, which was the occupier of the relevant property.

35. Code of Conduct: Cases Review

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented a report containing information on recent cases relating to other local authorities' codes of conduct.
- b) summarised the cases within the report noting the particular areas which members might wish to consider.

- c) highlighted that members should identify any issues raised within the report as being relevant for further consideration with regard to their impact upon members.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Members discussed a case involving a failure by councillors to declare that they were the directors of a company relevant to a decision. It was considered that, based on the available facts, if similar circumstances were considered by the Council they would be unlikely to result in the councillors having no case to answer.

The Reserve Independent Person noted that, in relation to the case involving the use of officers to send party political emails, there should be emphasis placed upon officers refusing unreasonable requests of this kind.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

36. Planning Committee Dispensation

The Legal and Democratic Services Manager:

- a) presented a report regarding an application which was likely to be considered by the Planning Committee in the near future.
- b) advised that a number of Planning Committee members were likely to have a personal and pecuniary interest in the business owing to their membership of the Labour Party.
- c) requested that the Committee determine whether it would be appropriate to grant a dispensation which would allow members of the Planning Committee to take part in consideration of the item if they would otherwise have had an interest which would have precluded them from doing so.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Members noted that the last dispensation agreed in relation to the Planning Committee had resulted in the decision being taken by officers under delegated powers; this was considered to be a preferable outcome as it limited the scope for the appearance of bias in the decision-making process.

RESOLVED that:

1. a dispensation for all elected members for a period of three months in relation to the planning application for Grafton House on Newland, as detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the report provided, be agreed in order to prevent a relevant meeting becoming inquorate.
2. the Committee's preference for the application to be determined by officers under their delegated powers be noted and enacted if possible.

37. Work Programme 2015-16

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the proposed 2015/16 Ethics and Engagement Committee work programme for consideration by members.
- b. invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- discussed the arrangements relating to the annual appointment of the Mayor, and considered the potential difficulties faced by members in balancing mayoral duties against work commitments. These matters would be discussed by the political group leaders prior to any consideration of broader principles by any relevant committees.
- noted that there was an ongoing investigation into a complaint against a councillor by a member of the public.

RESOLVED that the work programme be approved.