

Present:	Councillor Geoff Ellis (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Councillors:	Ronald Hills, Ric Metcalfe, Ralph Toofany and Loraine Woolley
Independent Person(s):	Chris Elkington and Roger Vine
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor Chris Burke, Councillor David Jackson, Councillor Hilton Spratt and Councillor Katie Vause

27. Confirmation of Minutes - 1 October 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013 be confirmed.

28. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ronald Hills declared a Personal interest in minute no. 30. He was a member of the Planning Committee and could therefore be affected by the dispensation being considered.

29. Code of Conduct: Cases Review

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented a report containing information on recent cases relating to other local authorities' codes of conduct.
- b) highlighted that members should identify any issues raised within the report as being relevant for further consideration with regard to their impact upon members.
- c) drew members' attention to the case involving a judicial review which would consider the compatibility of the new standards regime with the European Convention on Human Rights.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- considered the potentially high impact of any successful challenge to the standards regime made under the provisions to protect human rights.
- noted that the Council had previously been successful in avoiding discrimination against members in opposition political groups when considering code of conduct complaints.

The Independent Person summarised his understanding of the case involving human rights based upon recently-undertaken training as part of his role.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

30. Planning Committee Dispensation

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- 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 applicants owing to their involvement in the civic process.
- 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.

The Reserve Independent Person confirmed that the Planning Committee decision would be taken solely by the Planning Committee rather than by Council.

RESOLVED that a dispensation for all members and substitute members of the Planning Committee for a period of one year in relation to planning applications for a tank memorial on Tritton Road be agreed.

31. Lobbying and Corruption in Local Government Reports

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented a report summarising the contents of two studies recently published by bodies with an interest in the operation of the local government standards regime at a national level.
- b) highlighted the areas of the studies which were specifically relevant to local government and the new standards regime.
- c) noted the particular relevance of the report produced by Transparency International, the conclusions of which were considered to be valid if overly pessimistic.
- d) drew to members' attention the possibility of providing additional guidance to councillors regarding lobbying.
- e) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted sympathy with the argument that the changes to the standards regime had been a retrograde step, while agreeing that the Transparency International report had possibly overplayed the prevalence of corruption, relying on a few examples in which the perpetrators had been effectively caught and punished.
- stressed that the level of regulation against corruption and lobbying in local government was considerably tighter than within many other organisations, including the Houses of Parliament.
- highlighted the potential relevance of the reports regarding the Western Growth Corridor, discussing the manner in which members of the Planning Committee were particularly targeted for lobbying in relation to decisions scheduled to be taken on applications.

- discussed the potential within the Localism Act 2011 for the receipt of gifts and hospitality to constitute a disclosable pecuniary interest.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services advised that while the Council's Member Code of Conduct set a minimum value for declarations of gifts and hospitality, there was no such provision within the Localism Act 2011.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted.
2. the Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services be requested to produce and circulate a refresher guidance note to members with regard to the lobbying of councillors.

32. Local Democracy Week Review

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented a report regarding Local Democracy Week.
- b) highlighted the Council's involvement in Local Democracy Week 2013, advising that the focal point for the week had been a live interactive online session between the Leader and young people.
- c) noted the Council's plans for involvement in Local Democracy Week 2014, while also continuing to engage with young people throughout the year.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

The Chair noted that he and officers were seeking to make contact with local schools to arrange further member-student panels; these were being arranged with a view to staggering a manageable roll-out across the city.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

33. Succession Planning

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented a report which gave details of the Council's succession planning for elected members.
- b) highlighted the overlap between experienced members passing on their knowledge and skills, and the need for the Council to provide development opportunities for less experienced councillors.
- c) drew members' attention to potential programmes for 'buddying' and 'shadowing' with new and less experienced councillors, who could benefit from one-to-one guidance from appropriate persons.
- d) noted the need for any suggestions for development opportunities to take account of the limited financial resources available.
- e) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted the value of assessing the manner in which new councillors had previously been inducted.
- stressed that succession planning was an important issue for the Council as a whole, and that there was a need for the Council to renew itself through new councillors.
- noted the impact of the change from the previous committee system in undermining members' specialist knowledge of particular areas of Council business.
- supported the introduction of role-shadowing, subject to it being made clear that the role was being provided on a purely educative basis not entailing special responsibilities.
- highlighted the need for training to go beyond the purely reactive and to have a view to long-term development.
- stressed the leading role that councillors ought to play in inducting new councillors.
- highlighted the difficulties with attempting to introduce a formal assistant portfolio holder role within a council comprising relatively few councillors.

RESOLVED that:

1. officers be requested to seek feedback from councillors elected to the council in 2012 regarding feedback on their induction process.
2. the support for the proposals within report, subject to the clear avoidance of any additional special responsibilities for members shadowing senior councillors, be noted.

34. Work Programme Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented the current Ethics and Engagement Committee work programme for consideration by members.
- b) highlighted the forthcoming item on the work programme regarding increasing the diversity of electoral candidates and requested members' guidance on the focus for any discussion.
- c) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted the activities already undertaken by political parties, and highlighted the role the Council could play in encouraging people to stand for election.
- highlighted the need to ensure disabled people felt sufficiently supported to stand for election, while the general need to counter-act an ageing Council membership and reflect Lincoln's population was considered.
- discussed the need to encourage young people to participate in the democratic process by taking meetings to schools and arranging relevant visits.
- noted that the Council had attempted a number of initiatives in the past to seek to improve this situation.

The Reserve Independent Person stressed the role elected members had to play in providing direction to officers in this area and the need for feedback from councillors as to how they would like be involved in any processes.

RESOLVED that the work programme be approved.