

CONDUCT COMMITTEE

23 FEBRUARY 2017 - 1.00PM



PRESENT: Councillor Miss Hoy (Chairman), Councillor Boden (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Mason, Councillor Skoulding, Councillor Donnelly, C. Hawden-Beal(Non-Voting Substitute).

APOLOGIES: Councillor Humphrey, Councillor N Russell and T Gambell

Officers in attendance: Jane Bailey (Member Services and Governance) and Carol Pilson (Corporate Director)

CND9/16 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 7 February were confirmed and signed.

CND10/16 DISPENSATIONS FOR COUNCIL TAX MATTERS

Members considered the Dispensation for Council Tax Matters Report presented by Carol Pilson, she stated that members will recall that we were due to discuss this item at the last meeting, but Councillor Boden presented a letter from DCLG which set out that perhaps dispensations were not required. The conclusion at that meeting was that the item be deferred to enable officers to investigate further. Following that research the findings are set out in the report and in summary it has been concluded that following guidance from the DCLG, no dispensations are required for the setting of Council Tax and Local Council Tax Scheme and they should not be considered as Discloseable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's).

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Boden stated that he feels that this is the appropriate way forward, we are now aware that Council Tax and the associated matters to do with Council Tax are not disclosable pecuniary interests even though they could still be pecuniary interests. He stated that given that we had not been aware of the regulations which came out in 2012 he suggested it might be a good time to revisit our Code of Conduct, it is important that we comply with the legal requirements, and in light of this experience he suggested that the next meeting might be the right time to review the Code of Conduct;
2. Councillor Skoulding asked when the last review took place. Carol Pilson stated that it was probably updated around the same time that the Localism Act was introduced. She stated that if members do want to review the code of Conduct it might be useful for us all to look at some that other Council's have in place;
3. Councillor Skoulding stated that things have moved on in that last few years i.e. social networking and agreed it is time that we reviewed this document;
4. Councillor Miss Hoy stated that we have had different cases and that also tests the Committee as every time something new comes up we learn more, everything is a learning exercise;
5. Councillor Miss Hoy asked what happens at the Council Meeting later if the Conduct Committee agrees this today. Carol Pilson stated in essence nothing has changed for members, they are still able to do everything that they were able to before on that item. At the start of the item we could mention this or we could mention it earlier in the meeting as part of the Chairman' script;

6. Councillor Boden stated that it is relevant to raise this at the meeting. He added that his understanding is that those individuals, or their partners, who are in receipt of Council Tax Benefit do have a pecuniary interest and would need to disclose that even though it does not stop them from taking part in the meeting. Carol Pilson confirmed that Council Tax Benefit is not being considered today;
7. Councillor Miss Hoy suggested that it is better to inform members at the start of the meeting. Members agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Skoulding and AGREED:

- **That Conduct Committee note and agree the updated legal position regarding dispensations for Council Tax and Local Council Tax Support Scheme;**
- **For the Monitoring Officer to provide a briefing note to all members to notify them of the updated position and the status of the dispensations signed in May 2015;**
- **That the Conduct Committee will review their Code of Conduct moving forward.**

1.13pm

Chairman