

## **NOTICE OF MEETING TO DISCUSS STATUTORY RECOMMENDATION**

**DATE OF MEETING: 25 FEBRUARY 2025 (FULL COUNCIL)**

**TIME/PLACE: 10 AM, COUNCIL CHAMBER, FORDE HOUSE, NEWTON ABBOT**

This notice is to advise that as part of the Full Council meeting on 25 February 2025 an agenda item will be discussed to cover a statutory recommendation raised by our external auditors Grant Thornton as part of their Auditor's Annual Report and also discussed at Audit Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 February 2025 in relation to Member behaviour. This recommendation must be discussed under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. At the meeting the Council must decide whether the recommendation(s) are to be accepted and what action to be taken in response to these recommendation(s). The details of the recommendation are shown below:

The Council should:

1. Commission a suitably qualified expert to investigate the underlying causes of member behaviours which contravene the standards set out in the Council's constitution under the members' code of conduct and the member/officer protocol; and which have impacted the Council's reputation and working culture. The Council should then develop an action plan to enable members and officers to address those issues.
2. Adopt a consistent zero-tolerance approach to any swearing; lack of respect for other people attending meetings; or other abusive behaviour towards other members or officers in meetings. This should be done by making full use of the procedural rules set out in the Council's constitution by: Immediately adjourning the meeting; moving a motion that the member concerned be not heard; or moving a motion that the member concerned should leave the meeting.
3. Consider amendments to its constitution to extend those procedural rules to all meetings of committees of the Council and amend the Member Code of Conduct to include an obligation for all members to reinforce standards of behaviour and to support the Chair of the Council and chairs of committees of the Council in their use of procedural rules to ensure proper conduct. Group Leaders should model good behaviour and discipline members of their groups whose behaviour breaches the Code of Conduct and the member/officer protocol.
4. Continue to provide information and support to ensure that members and officers who are subjected to aggressive and abusive behaviour from individual members can, if they wish, submit a written complaint to the Monitoring Officer immediately, so that it can be dealt with under the Council's Standards procedures.
5. Ensure that Group Leaders take responsibility for their members working collaboratively with officers and for their members improving behaviours and relationships.
6. Review membership of the Standards Committee, with only members who have an excellent behavioural track record being eligible to join it. Meetings should then resume. A Governance Committee should be introduced to reinforce the work of the

Standards Committee. As with the Standards Committee, members on the Governance Committee must have an unblemished behavioural track record.

Securing good standards and behaviour amongst members will help to strengthen corporate governance and working culture. This in turn should help to create a positive environment from which the Council can build better relationships and address the other issues it faces, such as transacting business as usual and maintaining respect and co-operation around decisions once they have been taken.

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Martin Flitcroft  
Chief Finance Officer 14.2.25