

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2020

Present:

Councillor William Armitage (Chair)
Councillor Pat Kerry (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Pat Antcliff
Councillor Heather Liggett
Pat Coleman

Councillor David Hancock
Councillor Diana Ruff
Councillor Richard Welton

Also Present:

S Sternberg	Joint Head Of Service - Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer
K Shiliitto	Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer
L Ingram	Legal Team Manager - Contentious Team
R Pope	Customer Services Manager
N Calver	Governance Manager
A Bryan	Governance Team

STA/20 /20-21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor K Rouse.

STA/21 /20-21 Declarations of Interest

Members are requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

STA/22 /20-21 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 23 September 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

STA/23 /20-21 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter

The Customer Service Manager presented to the Committee the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter. The Council had received its Annual Review Letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on 22 July 2020 and it was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The Review Letter contained information on the number of complaints and enquiries that had been referred to the Ombudsman, including details of the complaints that had been upheld or referred back for a local resolution for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

The Customer Service Manager reported that there had been no complaints or enquiries made to the LGSCO for this period. This compared favourably with the previous year when there had been three complaints referred to the LGSCO.

A member of the Committee commented that to show such small figures as percentages for comparison was a distortion and could be misleading, although it was also noted that the report was positive.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Review letter of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman be noted.

**STA/24
/20-21** **Committee for Standards in Public Life Questionnaire**

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which highlighted the progress to date and the draft responses in relation to the Committee for Standards in Public Life local government ethical standards 15 best practice recommendations. The Monitoring Officer spoke about the 15 best practice recommendations and the proposed response to each.

Members of the Committee considered the proposed questionnaire responses and asked for a comment regarding preventing trivial or malicious allegations to be included. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that she would consider the matter and bring some criteria for trivial or malicious allegations back to the Committee.

Regarding who should make a complaint about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a parish clerk it was suggested that where there was one, the parish council leader should be able to make the complaint rather than the chair of the parish council.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Committee note the progress to date and the draft responses in relation to the Committee for Standards in Public Life local government ethical standards 15 best practice recommendations questionnaire be approved for submission.
- (2) That a report on criteria for trivial or malicious allegations against Councillors be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

(Monitoring Officer)

**STA/25
/20-21** **Review of the Constitution - Part 3**

The Standards Committee considered a report which set out areas for review within the Council's Constitution for consideration by the Standards Committee prior to submission as part of the review of the Constitution to Council for adoption.

The Committee was asked to give consideration to the following proposals for review outlined in Appendix 1, 2 and 3 to the report.

(a) JCG Terms of Reference

The Committee was asked to consider amendments to the JCG Terms of Reference. Following a review of the Terms of Reference the only change had been to remove reference to the Chief Executive and old officer titles.

(b) Call-in of Key Decisions

The Committee was asked to consider the call-in procedure, which was due for review.

(c) Delegations Scheme

The Committee was asked to consider a change to the constitution, which had been set out in a report to Council on 16 November 2020. This was regarding the recruitment of Independent Persons and gave the Monitoring Officer delegated authority to start a recruitment process for the appointment of an Independent Person.

RESOLVED – That the Standards Committee approved and submits to Council amendments to the Constitution as detailed in the report.

(Governance Manager)

STA/26 **Complaints Update - Verbal**
/20-21

The Committee received a verbal update from the Joint Head of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer on Member complaints.

It was reported that there were currently 14 complaints, eight of which had been closed with no further action and the remaining six were nearing closure. Of these 14 complaints, eight were in respect of Parish Councillors and six in respect of District Councillors.

STA/27 **Work Programme**
/20-21

Members gave consideration to the Work Programme for the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year. Members were reminded that this was a live and changing document and could be adapted to the needs of the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.

STA/28 **Urgent Business (public session)**
/20-21

Members were advised that there was no urgent business to be discussed in the public session at this meeting of the Standards Committee.