

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2022

Present:

Councillor William Armitage (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Pat Antcliff (Vice-Chair)

Councillor David Hancock
Councillor Heather Liggett
Councillor Tony Lacey

Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Diana Ruff
Pat Coleman - Parish Council
Representative

Trevor John Collins - Parish Council Representative

Also Present:

S Gordon	HR & OD Manager
L Ingram	Legal Team Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer
R Pope	Customer Services Manager
S Sternberg	Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
A Maher	Interim Governance Manager
A Bond	Governance Officer

STA/ Apologies for Absence

9/22-

23

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Gillott, K Rouse and R Welton. Councillor T Lacey attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor K Rouse.

STA/ Declarations of Interest

10/2

2-23

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this meeting.

STA/ Minutes of Last Meeting

11/2

2-23

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 13 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

STA/ Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter - **12/2 ADDITIONAL ITEM**

2-23

The Customer Services Manager delivered a report to Committee on the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter.

Members heard that the Council had received its Annual Review letter from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman on the 20th July 2022. There were 11 complaints and enquires received in total by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Out of these 11 complaints; five were premature complaints and referred back for local resolution; one complaint fell outside of the Council's policy as it

related to Rykneld Homes Ltd; two complaints were closed after initial enquiries; two complaints were not upheld and; one complaint was upheld. This compared favourably with previous years.

Committee were informed that a review of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure took place every three years and that a mini review had taken place during June 2022 which had included a consultation via the Citizens Panel that would take place during November 2022.

Members noted that quarterly corporate training was offered, including complaints training directly from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Members discussed the report and in particular, questioned the difference between when a complaint is closed and when it is not upheld. They heard that when a complaint was not upheld this was usually because it did not meet a certain criteria and was not the fault of the Council. When a complaint was closed, this was usually after an investigation had started and could no longer continue.

RESOLVED – That Standards Committee acknowledged the report and findings of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

**STA/
13/2** **Employee Code of Conduct - Update**

2-23 Members received a verbal update on the Employee Code of Conduct and heard that the current Employee Code of Conduct had been in place since September 2018 but was reviewed on an annual basis.

The Employee Code of Conduct set out the standards and expectations of behaviour which all employees were expected to abide by. It contained sections on political neutrality, disclosure of information, tendering, gifts and hospitality and, use of financial resources among many more. New starters were made aware of the Employee Code of Conduct.

**STA/
14/2** **Code of Corporate Governance**

2-23 The Monitoring Officer presented the Code of Corporate Governance to Committee. They heard that this was part of the annual governance statement that was approved with the budget on an annual basis.

This was the first time that the Code of Corporate Governance had been brought to Standards Committee but it would be brought to Committee in the future prior to its approval at Council.

RESOLVED – That Standards Committee recommended the Code of Corporate Governance to Council for it to be included within the Constitution.

**STA/
15/2** **Review of the Constitution - NOW PUBLISHED**

2-23 The Interim Governance Manager set out the proposed arrangements for reviewing and updating the Council's Constitution in preparation for the 2023-

24 Municipal Year.

Members heard that a three stage approach had been proposed in order to ensure that the Committee were able to carry out a more holistic review of the Constitution.

During stage one the Officers would identify and rectify any factual and typographical errors in the document. The Monitoring Officer would then formally agree these revisions and a summary of the changes made would be reported back to Committee at its Tuesday 6 December 2022 meeting.

Stage two would consider Councillors Roles and Responsibilities, the Code of Conduct and acceptable behaviour and how these should be reflected within the Council's Constitution. It was suggested that a special informal session should be arranged in order for Members to be able to discuss this in full.

Stage three would allow Members to consider the formal operation of the Council's Member and Officer Decision making arrangements and the expectations that underpin them. It was suggested that a special informal session should be arranged in order for Members to be able to discuss this in full.

Members discussed the proposed arrangements and considered that it would be good to meet in person for the informal discussion sessions.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) Standards Committee receives a report at its Tuesday 6 December 2022 meeting explaining the technical updates to the Constitution made by the Monitoring Officer under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.
- (2) That a special informal meeting is organised for Standards Committee Members to consider how Councillor Roles and Responsibilities, the Code of Conduct and acceptable behaviour should be reflected in the Council's Constitution.
- (3) That following on from this special informal meeting Standards Committee be asked to consider and agree a range of specific amendments to the Constitution at its meeting on Wednesday 1 February 2023, for recommendation to Annual Council on Monday 22 May 2023.
- (4) That a special informal meeting is organised for Standards Committee Members to consider how the formal operation of the Council's Member and Officer decision making arrangements, and the expectations which underpin them, should be reflected in the Council's Constitution.
- (5) That following on from this special informal meeting, Standards Committee be asked to consider and agree a range of specific amendments to the Constitution at its meeting on Wednesday 19 April 2023, for recommendations to Annual Council on Monday 22 May 2023.

STA/ Member Induction Programme 2023-24 - NOW PUBLISHED

16/2

2-23

Committee received an update on the planned Member Induction Programme for 2023-24. They heard that the Member Development Working Group believed that the programme should meet both the needs of newly elected members and re-elected members. This would be achieved by developing a three-part package.

Members heard that in the first stage, it would be crucial to rapidly resolve any housekeeping issues such as ROI forms and ICT. Arrangements would be put in place to allow ROI forms to be completed and subsequently updated online.

In the second stage, training sessions would be organised for new Members to learn and for re-elected Members to be reminded of the Councillors and Council roles and responsibilities. This would also include specific training on the Council's responsibilities for Corporate Parenting and for Safeguarding Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

The third stage would focus on Members understanding and contribution to the Council's various decision making bodies, such as Planning and Licensing Committees. There would also be a specific session on the role of Standards Committee.

Members discussed the Induction Plan and noted that this was a step in the right direction. They highlighted the importance of ICT training and raised concerns over the training that had been offered in the past to Members elected during a by-election.

Committee heard that the Monitoring Officer would look into what training was and could be provided to Members elected during a by-election.

It was also noted that the Members ICT and Training Officer would be presented at the meeting on 6 December in order to highlight some of the systems that would be used going forward.

STA/ Schedule of Meetings 2023/2024 - NOW PUBLISHED

17/2

2-23

Committee received an update on the schedule of meetings for 2023-24. They heard that a draft schedule of meetings would be prepared in advance of the next municipal year and Members would have the opportunity to be consulted on the proposed dates.

The draft schedule would be included on the agenda for the next meeting of Standards Committee due to take place on Tuesday 6 December. The final schedule would be recommended to Council for approval, at its Annual Meeting on Monday 22 May 2023.

Members were in favour of the proposed approach but raised questions over whether the draft schedule would take into account the meeting dates of Outside Bodies. They heard that this would be looked into.

STA/ Lord Evans letter to Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP

18/2

2-23

Members viewed a letter from Lord Evans which had been sent to the Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP, Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, as a result of the Government's recent response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's 2019 report on Local Government Ethical Standards.

Members expressed their disappointment that the Government had decided not to make any changes or to accept the recommendations of the Committee.

STA/

Complaints Update

19/2

2-23

Committee received an update on the number of complaints that have been received and what action had been taken on these within Quarter Two of the financial year.

Members heard that four new complaints had been received and one ongoing complaint had been closed. There were a total of four active complaints.

Members discussed the update and enquired as to what action would be taken if a complaint was upheld but the decision was not complied with. They heard that the Monitoring Officer would be assessing the complaints procedure and assessing any potential areas to be amended.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

STA/

Work Plan

20/2

2-23

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

STA/

Urgent Business

21/2

2-23

There was no urgent business.