

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2024

Present:

Councillor Kevin Gillott (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Helen Wetherall (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Kathy Rouse

Councillor Fran Petersen

Also Present:

Councillor Kevin Tait

S Sternberg

A Bryan

R Pope

Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Governance Manager

Customer Service Manager

STA/ Apologies for Absence

1/24-

25

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Cupit and P Antcliff.

STA/ Declarations of Interest

2/24-

25

There were no declarations of interest.

STA/ Minutes of Last Meeting

3/24-

25

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held on 26 April 2014 be approved as a true and accurate record.

STA/ Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter

4/24-

25

The Customer Service Manager presented a report to the Committee which set out details of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter.

The report explained that the Council had received its Annual Review letter from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) on the 17 July 2024. The review contained information on how many complaints and enquiries had been referred to the Ombudsman between the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

There had been 14 complaints and enquiries received by the LGSCO. Of these 14, three complaints had been upheld, three complaints had been referred back for local resolution, one complaint had not been upheld and seven complaints had been closed after initial enquiries. The report set out details of the upheld complaints.

The Committee discussed the report and considered that there was no pattern in relation to the three upheld complaints. A member of the Committee requested

further information regarding the upheld complaint in relation to planning, in particular regarding the issue of right to light. The Customer Service Manager said they would contact the Planning Team and circulate further information following the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report and findings of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman be acknowledged.

STA/ **New Sexual Harassment Legislation**

**5/24-
25**

The Committee considered a report regarding new legislation in relation to sexual harassment which came into force in October 2024.

The report set out that The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, placed a duty on all employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees in the workplace. In response, the Council had produced a guidance document for employees and Managers were briefing staff at team meetings. The document included definitions of what harassment was, what sexual harassment was and what bullying was. The guidance document was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report also stated that sexual harassment could come from third parties and Councillors witnessing sexual harassment of employees should raise this with the Head of Paid Service and the HR and OD Manager. Councillors who experienced sexual harassment personally in their role as a Councillor should raise this with the Monitoring Officer in the first instance. The definition of sexual harassment was based on Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010, a copy of which was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The Committee discussed that the new legislation would cover private employee chat groups, such as on WhatsApp, and it may be helpful to remind staff of this. It was also suggested that the guidance document for staff be circulated to all Councillors.

RESOLVED – That the new legislation on sexual harassment, that employees were being trained on the requirements and that it applied to third parties dealing with officers, be noted.

STA/ **Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers**

**6/24-
25**

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the new Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers.

The report stated that in June 2024 Solace, CIPFA and the LLG had issued a Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers. This had been the first time such guidance on these roles had been put together and was therefore a key document for Councils.

The report stated that the Code set out the individual roles of the three statutory officers and that in addition to adhering to the Nolan Principles, there were greater expectations of the Statutory Officers. These were called the seven standards of

the Golden Triangle and included understanding governance roles and responsibilities, and acting wisely etc. There was also a continuing theme throughout the Code of the three officers working together and the need for these three to flag up any governance issues as well as delivering advice that may not be welcome.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, and the contents of the Code be considered particularly in relation to the Constitution Review which was about to begin.

STA/ **Review of the Constitution**

**7/24-
25**

The Committee a report which set out the proposed arrangements for reviewing and updating the Council's Constitution.

The report stated that in the past two years the Committee's review of the Council's Constitution had been an in-depth review making some significant changes. For this year a review of the Constitution in terms of typographical errors, new legislation, changes in title etc. had already been carried out and in terms of other areas of review it was suggested that a light touch review be carried out.

A Member of the Committee suggested that the provision for substitutes for all committees be considered as part of this review.

RESOLVED – That any further suggestions of areas of the Constitution to be reviewed be submitted to the Monitoring Officer before the next meeting so that they can be incorporated into the work programme.

STA/ **Complaints Update**

**8/24-
25**

The Committee were presented with a report which provided an update on the number of complaints that had been received against Councillors.

The Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer reported that there were two ongoing complaints that were about to be concluded, after which there would be none outstanding.

RESOLVED – That the complaints updated be noted.

STA/ **Work Programme**

**9/24-
25**

The Committee considered its work programme for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

STA/ **Urgent Business (public session)**

**10/2
4-25**

There was no urgent business to be considered.