

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2021

Present:

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

Councillor Pat Antcliff
Councillor Heather Liggett
Pat Coleman

Councillor David Hancock
Councillor Kathy Rouse

Also Present:

S Sternberg	Joint Head Of Service - Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer
K Shillitto	Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer
N Calver	Governance Manager
D Stanton	Governance Officer

STA/ Apologies for Absence

29/2

0-21 Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor D Ruff and Parish Council Representative D Skinner.

STA/ Declarations of Interest

30/2

0-21 Members were 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 this meeting.

STA/ Minutes of Last Meeting

31/2

0-21 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 9 December 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

STA/ Joint Whistleblowing Policy Annual Report

32/2

0-21 The Governance Manager presented a report which updated Members on the use of the Joint Whistleblowing Policy.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

STA/ Independent Remuneration Panel

33/2

0-21 The Governance Manager presented a report which briefed the Standards Committee on the necessity for calling an Independent Remuneration Panel to consider Members' allowances.

RESOLVED – That the necessity to call an Independent Remuneration Panel be noted.

STA/ **Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct**

34/2

0-21

The Head of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer presented Members with the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct.

The Committee was asked to discuss the Model Code of Conduct and suggest any changes. It was stated that those changes would be incorporated into the Draft Members Code of Conduct which would be presented to Standards Committee at its meeting on 26 April. If approved, it would subsequently be recommended for adoption at Annual Council.

Members had a wide ranging discussion on the proposed Model Code of Conduct which included Member training; the Member induction scheme; respect and political debate; the equalities act; data protection; and gifts and hospitality.

There was a consensus that any training provided to Parish Councils should be free of charge. Members also discussed confidentiality and access to information.

RESOLVED – That the Monitoring Officer provide a draft North East Derbyshire District Council Model Code of Conduct to the Standards Committee on 26 April.

STA/ **Code of Practice - Vacating Office**

35/2

0-21

The Governance Manager presented the Committee with a proposed draft code of practice for the application of the 6 month rule, notification processes, and other means by which a Member could vacate public office.

The Committee agreed that there was a need for a code of practice in relation to the 6 month rule. Concerns were raised in regards to the potential for Members to not attend due to ill health, and if they were incapacitated they would be unable to contact the Monitoring Officer to request a dispensation. Members agreed that someone should be able to write to the Monitoring Officer to request a dispensation on the Members' behalf.

There was a consensus that there should be some form of notification process to Councillors if they had not attended for several months. The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that the legislation surrounding the 6 month rule made clear that the responsibility to attend Council meetings was with Members.

It was clarified that the 6 month rule did not apply to co-opted Members, and this clarification would be included in the proposed code of practice.

RESOLVED – That the Standards Committee approve the proposed Code of Practice for vacating office as amended in the meeting.

STA/ 36/2 **Protocol for Audio and Visual Footage of Meetings**

0-21 Members were presented with a proposed code of practice for audio/visual footage at meetings.

The Committee discussed the removal of footage from the Council's website if it was deemed to be offensive to the public. Members noted that Youtube reserved the right to remove potentially offensive footage themselves.

It was agreed that there should be a clear criteria for the removal of footage, and that there should be some form of protocol when considering confidential information at home.

RESOLVED – That the proposed code of practice for audio and visual meetings be approved.

STA/ 37/2 **Review of the Constitution Part 4**

0-21 The Governance Manager presented a report which allowed the Committee to consider the list of areas for review within the Council's Constitution prior to submission as part of the Annual Review of the Constitution to Council for adoption.

The Committee considered a number of changes to the Council's Constitution including amendments to Contract Procedure Rules, Monitoring Officer Delegations, and the Council Joint Consultative Group Terms of Reference.

The Committee also received clarity on the delegation given to the Monitoring Officer to temporarily approve dispensations under the Section 85 Rule.

RESOLVED – That the Committee support the submission of the proposals to Council as part of the Constitution Review.

STA/ 38/2 **Complaints Update**

0-21 The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that there were six outstanding complaints. Five were from 2020 and one was from 2021.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

STA/ 39/2 **Work Programme**

0-21 AGREED – That the Work Programme be noted.

STA/ 40/2 **Urgent Business**

0-21 The Chair informed the Committee that the date of next meeting would take place on Wednesday 21 April at 3.00 pm.