

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2024

Present:

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

Councillor Pat Antcliff
Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Kathy Rouse

Councillor Charlotte Cupit
Councillor Fran Petersen

Also Present:

S Sternberg Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
A Maher Governance Manager
A Bond Governance Officer

STA/ Apologies for Absence

28/2

3-24 There were no apologies for absence.

STA/ Declarations of Interest

29/2

3-24 There were no Declarations of Interest.

STA/ Minutes of Last Meeting

30/2

3-24 The Notes of the last meeting were approved subject to clarification on Minute Number: STA/27/23-24, that the Chair of the Committee had asked to explore further with the Assistant Director of Planning whether any prohibitions were in place that would prevent Executive Members from serving on the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above clarification, the Notes of the informal meeting of Standards Committee held on 30 January 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record.

STA/ RIPA Policy Review and Social Media Guidance for Members

31/2

3-24 Members received a report on the use of the RIPA policy over the last year. The report also outlined training that was to be provided to Authorising Officers and the Applying Officers over the next year.

Committee heard that the policy had been reviewed and there were no major changes proposed. They were also made aware that work would be undertaken to incorporate the use of drones into the policy.

Members were informed that the Council was periodically inspected by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners and that the last inspection had taken place in 2022, the outcome of this Inspection had been overall positive.

It was explained that there was likely to be an inspection in the current year.

Committee were informed that training was last carried out in 2022 and that refresher training would be carried out in the current year for all potentially involved in the process.

Members were made aware that there had been no applications of RIPA in the previous year. Most enforcement Officers in the Council were overt and therefore outside of RIPA.

RESOLVED – That Standards Committee:-

- (1) Approved the RIPA Policy as amended.
- (2) Received the update on training, the statistics and a likely inspection.

STA/ Whistleblowing Policy Review

**32/2
3-24**

Committee were presented with a report on the Whistleblowing Policy following a review. No major changes were recommended to the Policy.

Members heard that the Policy had last been reviewed in December 2022.

There were no instances of whistleblowing to report to Members.

RESOLVED – That Standards Committee:-

- (1) Approved the amended Policy for including on the Council's website.
- (2) Noted that no disclosures had been made under the Policy in 2023.

STA/ Complaints Update

**33/2
3-24**

Committee received an update on the number of complaints that had been received and what action had been taken on these.

Members heard that four new complaints had been received and seven complaints had been closed. There were a total of six ongoing complaints.

Committee were informed that two of the complaints had proceeded to investigation. The investigation concluded that in one case it would no longer be in the public interest to continue to pursue the complaint. In the other case, the investigation recommended that Members of the relevant Parish Council undertake compulsory training. After receiving the recommendations, the Parish Council concluded that it would not make the training compulsory for all Members. The training event was held and attended by five Members of the Parish Council.

Members heard that of the complaints that did not proceed to investigation, four were closed due to a lack of evidence, and one was closed as the Member had previously apologised for their behaviour.

Members discussed the report and considered that it would be worthwhile to include information on the timeframe of each complaint. They also heard that examples and lessons learned from complaints were used during training events.

RESOLVED – That Standards Committee noted the complaints update.

STA/ Work Plan

34/2

3-24

Committee discussed the Work Plan for the remainder of the municipal year as well as some specific issues and questions that could be used to guide the future work of the Committee.

Members discussed the need for increased engagement with Parish Councils and considered that it would be worthwhile for each Parish Council to undertake a self-assessment on their approach to governance issues. It was agreed that this proposed approach should be included on the review and assessment of the District, Parish and Town Councils Annual Conference event.

Committee considered that the use of informal committee meetings to discuss specific issues had been beneficial and that this should continue to form part of the Committee's remit in the future.

RESOLVED – That Standards Committee noted the Work Plan.

STA/ Urgent Business (public session)

35/2

3-24

There was no urgent business.