

Time commenced – 6.02pm
Finished – 6.26pm

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

25 January 2022

Present: Councillors S Khan (Chair), Atwal, A Holmes and Alan Cameron and Philip Sunderland

In Attendance: Emily Feenan - Director of Legal, Procurement and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Alex Hough – Head of Democracy
Steven Mason – Democratic Services Officer

16/21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor AW Graves, Stuart Green and Peter Purnell.

17/21 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were none.

18/21 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

19/21 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 were agreed.

20/21 Standards Committee Forward Plan

The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal, Procurement and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer on Standards Committee Forward Plan.

The report proposed the adoption of a Standards Committee Forward Plan, to provide members with the opportunity to regularly review and update items on the committee's work programme.

Members noted that the Standards Committee held a broad range of responsibilities in respect of maintaining high standards of behaviour amongst councillors and co-opted members and monitoring the effectiveness of several codes and protocols relating to councillor conduct. It was reported that the Monitoring Officer had identified several areas where further review by the Standards Committee would be beneficial.

The proposed Forward Plan was attached at Appendix 1 and was presented to the Standards Committee for approval.

Officers were questioned on training for Councillors and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the Councillors' Code of Conduct. Members noted that a report would be brought back to the Committee that would outline, in a wider sense, what training was mandatory and what was discretionary and that it was within the Committees gift to make any recommendations.

Members highlighted the importance of declaring pecuniary interests. It was reported that a piece of work was being undertaken to update the DPI form as a result of recent changes to the Code of Conduct. Members also noted that guidance was due to be issued as there had also been changes to the declarations in relation to gifts and hospitality. It was proposed that these matters be added to the Forward Plan for the meeting due to be held in March 2022. It was reported that the Monitoring Officer was part of a Derbyshire wide group of Monitoring Officers that was looking at a protocol in relation to how potential DPI offences were reported to Monitoring Officers and subsequently, if necessary, to the Police.

Members discussed the importance of best practice guidance in relation to the use of social media and highlighted the increasing instances that social media played in the complaints received by the Monitoring Officer. It was reported that there were plenty of resources available from nationally recognised organisations that could be reviewed. It was proposed that this matter be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed that the Code of Conduct be added to the Forward Plan for consideration at the next scheduled meeting and be reviewed regularly, thereafter.

Resolved:

- 1. to agree the Standards Committee Forward Plan detailed at Appendix 1 of the report;**
- 2. to agree that mandatory and discretionary training for Members and best practice guidance in relation to the use of social media be added to the Forward Plan; and**
- 3. to agree that the Code of Conduct be added to the Forward Plan for consideration at the next scheduled meeting and be reviewed regularly, thereafter.**

21/21 Volume and Outcomes of Councillor Complaints 2020/21

The Board received a report of the Director of Legal, Procurement and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer on Volume and Outcomes of Councillor Complaints 2020/21.

The report provided the Committee with an update on the volume and outcomes of Councillor complaints dealt with in the 2021/22 municipal year.

It was reported that one complaint was carried over from the 2019/20 municipal year, proceeded to investigation and was informally resolved by way of an apology to a meeting of the Licensing Committee.

It was also reported that one complaint was carried over from the 2020/21 municipal year and was dismissed.

Members noted that nine complaints had been received in the 2021/22 municipal year and that four complaints had been dismissed, three complaints had proceeded to investigation and two were still live.

Resolved to note the volume and outcome of Councillor complaints as outlined in the report.

22/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

23/21 Summaries of Councillor Complaints 2020/21

The Committee considered an exempt report of the Director of Legal, Procurement and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer on Summaries of Councillor Complaints 2020/21.

Resolved to note the summaries of Councillor complaints 2020/21 contained in the report.

MINUTES END