

Report sponsor: Director of Legal, Procurement
and Democratic Services
Report author: Head of Democracy

Standards Committee Forward Plan

Purpose

- 1.1 This report proposes the adoption of a Standards Committee Forward Plan, to provide members opportunity to regularly review and update items on the committee's work programme.
- 1.2 The Standards Committee holds 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. The Monitoring Officer has identified several areas where further review by the Standards Committee would be beneficial.
- 1.3 The proposed Forward Plan is attached at Appendix 1 and is presented to the Standards Committee for approval.
- 1.4 At its meeting of 25 January 2022, it was resolved that the Councillors' Code of Conduct be added to the Standards Committee Forward Plan for the next meeting and would be regularly reviewed thereafter. The Code of Conduct is attached at Appendix 2 for this purpose.

Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider and agree the Standards Committee Forward Plan detailed at Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2.2 To add any additional items or make alterations to the Forward Plan for future consideration by the Standards Committee.

Reasons

- 3.1 To ensure the Standards Committee can effectively fulfil its responsibilities to uphold high standards of conduct and ethical governance within Derby City Council.
- 3.2 To provide the Standards Committee with opportunity to consider and discuss its work programme for future meetings, to address emerging issues and identify areas for further investigation that fall under its terms of reference.

Supporting information

- 4.1 The recommendations are intended to provide the Standards Committee with opportunity to discuss matters relating to councillor conduct that fall outside of the committee's regular review of progress of complaints.
- 4.2 The Scheme of Delegations contained within the Council Constitution reserves the following matters to the Standards Committee:
- Promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members
 - Assisting councillors and co-opted members to observe the Councillors' Code of Conduct
 - Advising Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillors' Code of Conduct
 - Monitoring the effectiveness of the Councillors' Code of Conduct
 - Monitoring the effectiveness of related codes or protocols
 - Advising on training for councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Councillors' Code of Conduct
 - Assessing and reviewing complaints about councillors and co-opted members.
- 4.3 The Standards Committee has recently reviewed the Councillors' Code of Conduct and the Procedure for the consideration of complaints against councillors, following recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life and the publication of the Local Government Association's Model Code of Conduct. Council agreed changes to the Code of Conduct and the Complaints Procedure in September 2021.
- 4.4 The draft Forward Plan seeks to identify other items for consideration that are of relevance or are in response to identified best practice; that respond to trends and patterns identified in complaints made against councillors; or that require regular review. Areas initially identified by the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Forward Plan are as follows:
- Reporting of disclosable pecuniary interests, gifts and hospitality, in response to alterations agreed to the Councillors' Code of Conduct reflecting the Local Government Association's Model Code of Conduct.
 - A review of best practice in relation to councillors' use of social media, in response to the increasing number of complaints that relate to activity on social media and national discourse relating to civility in public life.
 - Reviews of existing protocols relating to councillor conduct, effective working relationships with officers and access to facilities and resources (which were last reviewed in Autumn 2019).
- 4.5 The Standards Committee will continue to receive regular updates on the volume and outcome of councillor complaints, alongside the items identified for discussion on the Forward Plan.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 Items for inclusion on the draft Forward Plan will be identified by the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee.
- 5.2 The draft Forward Plan will be reviewed at each meeting of the Standards Committee and agreed by majority vote.

Other options

- 6.1 To do nothing. This is not advised as the recommendations contained in this report are intended to strengthen the role of the Standards Committee in upholding high standards of conduct and governance.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 None directly arising, aside from potential savings referenced at paragraph 10.1 – any financial implications will be addressed when items included on the Forward Plan are reported to the Standards Committee.

Legal implications

- 8.1 None directly arising – any legal implications will be addressed when items included on the Forward Plan are reported to the Standards Committee.

Climate implications

- 9.1 None directly arising.

Other significant implications

- 10.1 Regular review of key documents relating to councillor conduct by the Standards Committee will assist all councillors and co-opted members to maintain the highest standards of behaviour, leading to fewer complaints requiring external investigation and ensuring any reputational risk to the authority is minimised.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal		
Finance		
Service Director(s)		
Report sponsor		
Other(s)	Alex Hough – Head of Democracy	24/10/2022
Background papers:		
None		
List of appendices:		
Appendix 1 – Standards Committee Forward Plan		
Appendix 2 – Councillors' Code of Conduct		

Standards Committee Forward Plan

Meeting	Item
Tuesday 9 August 2022	Reporting of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Protocol on reporting of potential DPI offences Councillors' Code of Conduct
Tuesday 1 November 2022	Social Media Policy – application to councillors and review of complaints involving social media activity
Tuesday 24 January 2022	Review of 'Working Together: Councillor/Officer Protocol'
Tuesday 21 March 2023	Review of 'Protocol on use of facilities, services and equipment by councillors'

Agreed items to be added to the Forward Plan:

- 1. Mandatory and discretionary training for Members**
- 2. Best practice guidance in relation to the use of social media**