

Time commenced – 6.00pm
Finished – 6.18pm

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
23 January 2024

Present: Councillors S Khan (Chair), Graves and Pattison and Independent
Persons Alan Cameron, Alistair Davies and Graham Knight

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

26/23 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Atwal.

27/23 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were none.

28/23 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

**29/23 Minutes of the meetings held on 31 October 2023
and 19 December 2023**

The minutes of the meetings held on 31 October 2023 and 19 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

30/23 Standards Committee Forward Plan

The Committee received a report of the Director of Corporate Governance, Property and Procurement and Monitoring Officer on Standards Committee Forward Plan.

The report provided members with the opportunity to review and update items on the committee's work programme.

It was reported 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.

The Forward Plan was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

Members noted that at its meeting on 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 that it would be regularly reviewed thereafter. The Code of Conduct was attached at Appendix 2 of the report for that purpose.

The procedures for the assessment and review of allegations of breaches of the Councillors' Code of Conduct were attached at Appendix 3 for the same purpose.

Resolved to note the Standards Committee Forward Plan.

31/23 Councillor Training and Development

The Committee received a report of the Director of Corporate Governance, Property and Procurement and Monitoring Officer on Councillor Training and Development.

It was reported that Full Council agreed a programme of mandatory and advisory training for councillors annually at its February meeting, for the forthcoming municipal year.

The report provided an opportunity for members of the Standards Committee to comment on the content of the training programme for the next municipal year, prior to its consideration by Council on 28 February 2024.

Members noted that the committee was asked to consider any particular training requirements associated with the role and remit of the Standards Committee, either for all councillors or members of the committee.

It was also noted that in years where an election was held, induction training took place immediately following the election of councillors and that a Councillor Training Day was held annually in June to deliver all mandatory training at a single opportunity. It was reported that whilst councillors were encouraged to attend all training opportunities provided to them, the topics that had previously been identified as mandatory were:

- Deliberations and Decision Making
- Children's Safeguarding
- Adult's Safeguarding
- Data Protection and Information Governance
- Councillors' Code of Conduct
- Introduction to Corporate Parenting

It was reported that additional mandatory training was arranged for members of the Planning Control Committee, Licensing Committee and Audit and Governance Committee throughout the municipal year.

Members noted that the Council held monthly Councillor Training and Development Evenings where additional sessions were delivered by subject experts, both internal and external to the Council.

It was noted that in January 2019, the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) issued its most recent report on Local government ethical standards and that within the report the CSPL stressed the importance of training as a means of reinforcing the importance of standards in public life and stated: 'training should not be dry or compliance focused but should set out the rationale for high standards in public life and should be scenario based so that councillors can engage with concrete examples and see the relevance of standards to different areas of activity in which they might be involved'.

Resolved to note the report.

32/23 Volume and Outcomes of Councillor Complaints 2023/24

The Committee received a report of the Director of Corporate Governance, Property and Procurement and Monitoring Officer on Volume and Outcomes of Councillor Complaints 2023/24.

The report provided the Committee with an update on the volume and outcomes of Councillor complaints dealt with in the 2023/24 municipal year.

It was reported that 12 complaints had been received in the 2023/24 municipal year and that 10 had been dismissed and two were live.

It was also reported that it was important to note that when a complaint was dismissed, this included circumstances by which a subject member had taken steps to resolve a complaint by way of an informal resolution to the satisfaction of the Monitoring Officer and that this could include a written apology or some other form of corrective action by the councillor concerned.

Members noted that in accordance with the procedures for the assessment and review of allegations of breaches of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, five out of the 10 dismissed complaints had been dismissed following an apology being issued by the subject member, either directly to the complainant or to the Monitoring Officer.

Resolved to note the volume and outcome of Councillor complaints in 2023/24 as outlined in the report.

33/23 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.

34/23 Summaries of Councillor Complaints 2023/24

The Committee considered an exempt report of the Director of Corporate Governance, Property and Procurement and Monitoring Officer on Summaries of Councillor Complaints 2023/24.

The report provided the committee with details of Councillor complaints dealt with in the 2023/24 municipal year.

Resolved to note the summaries of Councillor complaints 2023/24 contained in the report.

MINUTES END