

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 JUNE 2023 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Paul Oatway QPM (Chairman), Cllr Allison Bucknell (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney, Cllr Mike Sankey,
Cllr Derek Walters, Gordon Ball, Joanne Cetti and Julie Phillips

68 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Pip Ridout
- Cllr Bill Parks
- Cllr Iain Wallis

69 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 April 2023 were presented for consideration.

It was;

Resolved

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

70 **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

71 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were none.

72 **Public Participation**

Public Speakers

Mr Francis Morland spoke in relation to item 8 – Recommendations from the Constitution Focus Group on Proposed Changes.

Mr Morland stated he was opposed to the Council decision taken to adopt the current Code of Conduct in place of the previous light touch version, though the recommended changes were an improvement.

The Chairman noted that the process undertaken by the Standards Committee and the Code of Conduct Working Group had been extensive, and he considered the proposals in the report addressed issues that arisen.

The Committee also noted that the Code of Conduct adopted by Wiltshire Council was for its members only and that when a complaint was assessed against a member of a town or parish council, it would be done so against the code relevant to each individual council.

There were no other statements.

Two questions had been submitted by Mr Peter Gantlett, in time for a written response.

The questions and responses had been published as supplement 1 to the agenda.

73 **Status Report on Code of Conduct Complaints**

The Committee received the status report, updating on the number and outcome of Code of Conduct complaints received since the last meeting on 19 April 2023 and providing a summary of the complaints considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee (ASC).

There had been 4 Code of Conduct complaints received by the Monitoring Officer during that period. Of these, 1 was determined No Further Action (NFA) by the Monitoring Officer, 1 was resolved via Informal Resolution, 2 were due to be assessed by the ASC at its next meeting on 20 June 2023 (on the morning of the day of the Standards Cmmtt meeting). There were currently 4 investigations running.

A table of current cases had been provided to the Chairman on 12 April and 14 June 2023, for a dip sample of cases to be undertaken to enable oversight.

The Chairman of the Assessment Sub Committee noted that the level of complaints was variable, with often multiple complaints related to the same few parish councils, which appeared not to be functioning properly.

It was suggested that those parish councils involved in multiple Code of Conduct complaints, and which were felt not to be functioning correctly, could be named in future.

The Monitoring Officer agreed that this information could be included. He commended the professional manner in which the members of the ASC, the

Independent Persons and the Complaints Team carried out their duty which was of a high standard.

After a discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the position on Code of Conduct Complaints.

74 **Appointment of Members to the Sub-Committees and Working Groups**

The Committee noted the report.

It was;

Resolved;

1) To appoint five members to the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee for the forthcoming year as follows:

**Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Ernie Clark,
Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Sam Pearce Kearney**

2) To agree the terms of reference for the Constitution Focus Group, and appoint a Standards Committee representative as follows:

Cllr Richard Britton.

75 **Recommendations from the Constitution Focus Group on Proposed Changes to the Constitution**

Kieran Elliott, Democracy Manager (Democratic Service) presented a report on the proposed changes to:

- Parts 12 – Code of Conduct,
- Protocol 4 – Planning Code of Good Conduct and
- Protocol 12 – Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel Protocol

All changes had been recommended by the Constitution Focus Group. It was confirmed changes to Protocol 12 would also need to be approved by Swindon Borough Council.

It was,

Resolved

To recommend Full Council approve changes to the following sections of the Constitution:

- Part 12 – Code of Conduct
- Protocol 4 – Planning Code of Good Practice
- Protocol 12 – Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel Protocol

76 **Date of the Next Meeting**

Resolved;

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 28 September 2023 at 2.00pm.

77 **Urgent Items**

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 2.35 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Lisa Alexander of Democratic Services, direct line 01722 434560, e-mail lisa.alexander@wiltshire.gov.uk

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