

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2020 AT ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

Cllr Derek Brown OBE, Cllr Andrew Bryant, Cllr Ernie Clark, Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Howard Greenman (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Paul Oatway QPM (Chairman), Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Mr Richard Baxter and Mr Michael Lockhart

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Britton

11 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Pam Turner and Cllr Fred Westmoreland.

12 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

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

13 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

14 **Chairman's Announcements**

Through the Chair there were the following announcements:

It was noted that the Council's draft response to the Local Government Association on its draft Model Code of Conduct had been submitted in August 2020, following circulation to the Committee.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life had also contacted the Chief Executive to seek an update on the Council's response to its Best Practice Recommendations in its report on Local Government Ethical Standards, which was considered by the Committee at its meeting on May 2019. A response

based on the considerations of the Committee was being prepared, and could be provided to the Committee.

15 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

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

A report was presented on the status of Code of Conduct complaints. A correction was made to paragraphs 10 and 12 of the report. It was clarified that the breakdown of the complaints should read: two assessed by sub-committee no further action, one dealt with by alternative resolution, nine pending assessment (incorrectly listed in appendix 1 as 5 for the month of August when in fact should be 4), five on short term hold at request of complainant and two assessed by MO under paragraph 4.6 as no further action, for a total of 19.

It was noted that following disruption as a result of Covid-19, the Assessment Sub-Committee was now continuing to meet and determine complaints. It was noted that there could be an increase in complaints in the period running up to new elections. Thanks were also made to the member of the Sub-Committee for their work.

Later in the meeting it was also noted as stated in the report that it was important to ensure that complaints were dealt with in a timely and high quality matter, and the Chairman would therefore undertake with the Monitoring Officer a random dip sampling of complaints to ensure the procedures were operating effectively and efficiently.

At the end of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the current position on Code of Conduct Complaints.**
- 2) **To consider whether there is any further or different information that they would wish to see in future updates.**
- 3) **To note the additional monitoring of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure being developed**

17 **Recommendations from the Constitution Focus Group**

A report was presented on recommendations for constitutional changes proposed by the Constitution Focus Group.

It was noted that the Committee had proposed changes to the Policy Framework at its meeting on 15 January 2020. At its meeting on 21 July 2020 Full Council had requested this be reviewed in response to a query raised by a member of the public. The Focus Group had re-considered the proposals and revised the wording in relation to the local development framework documents

to clarify that there would no change in those documents being approved by Full Council.

It was also recommended that the name of the Audit Committee be changed to the Audit and Governance Committee, to reflect its terms of reference and responsibilities. No other changes to the Committee terms of reference were proposed.

It was also stated that discussions had been held on amending the terms of reference of the Health and Wellbeing Board, including its membership details.

Therefore, it was,

Resolved:

To recommend Full Council approve the revisions to Part 3B of the Constitution as set out in Appendix C.

18 **Appointment of Independent Persons**

A report was presented on the process for appointment of Independent Persons, whose views must be sought and taken into account before the Council makes a decision on Code of Conduct complaints, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

The Council had appointed three Independent Persons, whose terms would come to an end in May 2021. It was proposed to delegate responsibility for the recruitment process for to the Monitoring Officer, so that Council would be able to appoint to the roles in the first meeting after the May 2021 elections.

Therefore, it was,

Resolved:

To authorise the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, to take all necessary steps to secure the appointment of three Independent Persons at the meeting of Full Council following the election in May 2021.

19 **Date of the next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 16 December 2020.

20 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 2.30 - 2.55 pm)

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