

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2024 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 Bill Parks, Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney,
Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Derek Walters, Gordon Ball (non-voting) and Julie Phillips
(non-voting)

96 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Pip Ridout

The Committee also noted the following membership changes:

- Cllr Tamara Reay to be removed as a Member of the Committee and Cllr James Sheppard to be added as a Member to the Committee

97 **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous Standards Committee meeting held on 18 April 2024 and the minutes from the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee meetings held on 11 October 2023, 16 November 2023, 8 February 2024 and 15 May 2024 were presented for consideration.

It was;

Resolved

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

98 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

99 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

100 **Public Participation**

One public question had been received by the deadline published in the agenda, to which a response had been provided. The question and response had been published as an agenda supplement.

101 **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 18 April 2023 and providing a summary of the complaints considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee (ASC).

Between 8 April 2024 and 20 June 2024, the Monitoring Officer had received 15 complaints under codes of conduct. Of these, 1 was referred for investigation by the Assessment Sub-Committee, 1 was dismissed by the Assessment Sub-Committee as requiring No Further Action. 2 were dismissed by the Monitoring Officer due to allegations relating to a member acting in their private capacity, 1 was dismissed by the Monitoring Officer due to the complaint being regarding an employment matter between the Complainant and council, 1 was dismissed by the Monitoring Officer following the resignation of the Subject Member, 3 were dismissed by the Monitoring Officer due to insufficient information being provided, 1 was dismissed by the Monitoring Officer under paragraph 4.6 of Protocol 11, 1 resolved informally by the Monitoring and 4 were awaiting assessment.

It was report that the 15 complaints for the quarter was about average compared to the previous quarterly periods.

The Committee noted that there were two live Investigations ongoing at present.

A table of current cases had been provided to the Chairman on 11 June 2024 for a dip sample of cases to be undertaken to enable oversight.

The Chairman of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee, Councillor Ruth Hopkinson noted that it was likely there would be a rise in code of conduct complaints as they moved closer to the local election period next May.

After a discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the position on Code of Conduct Complaints.

102 **Changes to Protocol 11 - Arrangements for Dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints**

The Committee received the report which set out the proposed changes to Protocol 11 – Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints.

The proposals included the removal of the separate Local Assessment Criteria document, with relevant content being incorporated into the new Protocol 11 and amendments to the Procedure Rules for the Assessment Sub-Committee.

Both of the current documents had been in force since January 2020. Since that time aspects requiring modification had been raised and were now addressed within the proposed changes, as summarised within the report.

It was;

Resolved:

To approve the proposed new version of Protocol 11 – Arrangements for Dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints and recommend its adoption into the council’s Constitution by Full Council.

To recommend the removal of the Local Assessment Criteria document by Full Council, with necessary and updated information from the document now incorporated in the proposed Protocol 11.

To approve the proposed new version of the Assessment Sub-Committee Procedure document.

103 **Constitutional Changes**

The Committee received a report on the proposed changes to:

- Part 10 – Contract and Procurement Rules

All changes had been recommended by the Constitution Focus Group following meetings reviewing the sections. This included incorporating process detail within the internal Procurement Manual, and other changes to ensure compliance with the latest legislation.

It was,

Resolved:

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

- Part 10 – Contract and Procurement Rules

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

The Committee received a report requesting the appointment of members to the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee for the forthcoming year and to confirm the terms of reference of the Focus Group, and to select a member or substitute of the Committee to serve as the representative on it.

It was;

Resolved:

The Standards Committee agreed:

- 1. To appoint five members to the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee for the forthcoming 2024/25 year as follows:**

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

- 2. The terms of reference for the Constitution Focus Group and to appoint Cllr Richard Britton as the Standards Committee representative for 2024/25.**

105 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 1.50 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

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line 01225 713114 or email communications@wiltshire.gov.uk