

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 May 2023 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bhatti, Hilary Moore (Chair), Bill Brown (Vice-Chair), Peter Bernards, Will Cooper, Brenda Dacres, Rosie Parry, James Rathbone and Eva Stamirowski

ALSO PRESENT: Jeremy Chambers - Director of Law and Corporate Governance and Clare Weaser – Committee Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Leslie Thomas.

1. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Standards Committee held on 5 July 2022 and 29 March 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true and accurate record.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Appointment of Standard Sub Committees

RESOLVED that the appointments to Standards Sub Committees be as follows:-

Standards Sub- Committee A – Councillors Cooper, Dacres, Moore, Onikosi and Parry.

3 Co-optees able attend the next meeting of this Sub - Committee on 28 June 2023,

Standards Sub-Committee B- Councillors Bernards, Brown, Rathbone, Sheikh and Stamirowski.

3 remaining Co-optees.

4. Work Programme

4.1 The Monitoring Officer presented the report. He suggested the following items be included in a work programme for Standards Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24:-

- Every meeting to receive an update from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Deputy Monitoring Officer in relation to current complaints.
- Review of the Member Code of Conduct – A new model had been introduced 2 years ago. The Monitoring Officer outlined how this had been received by other local authorities and recommended that Standards Committee should have a detailed discussion on it. The

Council had a procedure for the Member Code of Conduct, but it was not part of the constitution. The procedure needed to be reviewed to ensure it was fit for purpose and then added as an appendix to the Code of Conduct in the constitution.

- Trend analysis of complaints to be considered annually - The number of complaints was currently low but if this increased, the trend analysis could be reviewed more often.
- Training requirements for members of the Committee and co-optees – This would be built around the work programme for the next year.

4.2 The Monitoring Officer advised that when an update was submitted to the main Standards Committee on complaints, it would be deliberately vague and high level to ensure that members could not be accused of being prejudiced by knowing too much about the matter in advance.

4.3 In response to a member question, the Monitoring Officer said that he would check the constitution with regard to an annual review of the Council's whistleblowing policy. If it was in the constitution, it would be reviewed by this Committee and would be included on the work programme.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the items suggested by the Monitoring Officer for inclusion in the work programme be agreed.

5. Constitution Review update

5.1 The Monitoring Officer presented the report. He advised members of the following:-

- Phase 1 of the review of the constitution was agreed in November 2022
- Phase 2 was agreed in March 2023
- Phase 3 would commence in 2 weeks and would consider the Council procedure rules, committee procedure rules, Licensing committee and the Scheme of Delegation. A report would then be submitted to the Constitution Working Party and then to a Council meeting in the Autumn.
- Phase 4 would consider member code of conduct, protocol for officer/member relations, other issues including planning protocols and catch-all of outstanding items following the first 3 phases.

5.2 The Monitoring Officer said that in order to fit in with the wider constitutional programme, he considered it to be important that the Standards Committee work programme ran to feed into phase 4 in parallel with phase 3. The Code of Conduct must be considered by Standards Committee, therefore he said it would be sensible for it to be included in the work programme whilst phase 3 of the constitutional review was on going. This would ensure that by phase 4, at the end of Autumn, Standards Committee would already have done the necessary work. The Member Code of Conduct would be considered between now and the end of the year.

- 5.3 The Chair reminded members of the Committee that the date of the next meeting had changed and would be held on 28 June 2023 at 7pm. It would be a meeting of Standards Sub Committee A.