

Minutes of the Meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on 18 January 2021

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chairman); Councillor Hannah Dalton (Vice-Chair); Councillors Kate Chinn, Robert Foote, Luke Giles, Eber Kington, David Reeve, Guy Robbins (Present for Items 4-5 only) and Peter Webb

Officers present: Amardip Healy (Chief Legal Officer), Tim Richardson (Committee Administrator) and Sarah Keeble (Democratic Services Officer)

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in relation to items on the agenda.

7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous Meeting of the Standards Committee held on 3 April 2019 and the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 19 November 2019 were agreed as a true record and the Committee authorised the Chairman to sign them.

8 REVIEW OF CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Committee received a report providing an update on complaints made under the Code of Conduct for Members from 1st February 2018 to 31st December 2020 and the steps taken to both promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members.

The Committee received a verbal introduction from the Chief Legal Officer.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) **Key Performance Indicators:** Following a question from a Member, the Officer confirmed that Key Performance Indicators can be incorporated into the Appendix, to detail dates of complaints coming in, as well as the start and completion dates for any investigations that may take place.
- b) **Annual report:** Members noted the next date for this report to return to the Committee, and spoke about the possibility of an additional recommendation being added so that this occurs annually as standard.

An additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor David Reeve, and seconded by Councillor Rob Foote. This recommendation was to read:

- (3) To agree that the Report of Complaints will be brought annually to the Standards Committee from the first Meeting after Annual Council.**

Following consideration, it was resolved unanimously that the Committee:

- (1) Agreed to note the complaints from the 1st February 2018 to the 31 December 2020;**
- (2) Agreed to note the actions taken to promote and maintain high standards of Conduct by Members;**
- (3) Agreed that the Report of Complaints will be brought annually to the Standards Committee from the first Meeting after Annual Council.**

9 UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

The Committee received a report providing an update on the work to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and also to consider a response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life to their open letter.

The Committee received an introduction from the Chief Legal Officer.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) Language:** Members noted a number of discrepancies throughout the LGA Code of Conduct, including areas where more clarity could be sought. The Officer noted that comments regarding changes or amendments could be collected and considered at a future meeting of the Standards Committee.

An additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor Eber Kington, and seconded by Councillor Guy Robbins. This was to read:

- (3) To agree that Members would send comments on the draft LGA Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer; to be brought as a report to the Committee at a future Standards meeting.**

Following consideration, it was resolved unanimously that the Committee:

- (1) Agreed to note the actions taken to promote and maintain high standards of Conduct by Members;**
- (2) Considered a response to the ethical standards letter from the Committee on Standards in Public Life and delegate to the Monitoring Officer after consultation with the Chairman, to respond.**

Following consideration, it was resolved with 7 Members voting for, 1 Member voting against and the Chairman not voting that the Committee:

- (3) Agreed that Members would send comments on the draft LGA Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer; to be brought as a report to the Committee at a future Standards meeting.**

10 STANDING ORDERS ON PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Committee received a report detailing a review of what public participation should look like for the future in terms of Council and Committee Meetings.

The Committee received a verbal introduction from the Chief Legal Officer.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) Wording of Recommendation:** Members raised concerns regarding the lack of clarity surrounding the wording of Recommendation 1A. It was noted that any discrepancies with its intended meaning may be clarified with some additional wording as suggested by the Officer.

An amendment to Recommendation 1A was proposed by Councillor Eber Kington, and seconded by Councillor Hannah Dalton. This was to read:

- (a) Not to change Standing Order CPR1.1 in line with the reasons set out within paragraph 2.10 of the report;**

This amendment was agreed unanimously.

An amendment to Recommendation 4 was proposed by the Monitoring Officer. This was to read:

- (4) Agreed the Committee's Working Group be set up and to extend an invitation to all Members in seeking a further nomination for a Member of the Standards Committee who falls within the skillset as set out in paragraph 2B and one other Member.**

This amendment was agreed unanimously.

Following consideration, it was resolved unanimously that the Committee:

- (1) Agreed to note the recommendation of the Committee's Working Group:**
- (a) Not to change Standing Order CPR1.1 in line with the reasons set out within paragraph 2.10 of the report;**
- (b) To recommend a review of the role of public participation within the Council's Standing Orders;**

- (c) To consider how public participation within the Standing Orders processes can be made more accessible and inclusive.
- (2) Agreed for a Working Group to be set up to carry out a review of public participation Standing Orders and to make recommendations on any changes;
 - (3) Agreed the terms of reference for the Working Group, set out at Appendix 1;
 - (4) Agreed the Committee's Working Group be set up and to extend an invitation to all Members in seeking a further nomination for a Member of the Standards Committee who falls within the skillset as set out in paragraph 2B and one other Member.

The meeting began at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.43 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIRMAN)