

# Public Document Pack

## Standards Committee

Thursday, 22nd June, 2023

6.00 pm

Meeting Room A

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### AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  
**Minutes of Previous Meeting** 3 - 5
3. **Declarations of Interest**  
**Declarations of Interest** 6
4. **Membership of Standards**  
To receive a verbal update on the Membership of Standards
5. **Standards Arrangements**  
To receive a presentation on the Standards Arrangements
6. **Member Training 2023/24**  
To review the Member Training 2022/23 and consider the training programme for 2023/24.  
**Report -Member Training 2023-24** 7 - 11  
**Member Training 2022 - 23**
7. **Standards Committee Work Programme 2023/24**  
**Report -Standards Committee work programme 2023-24** 12 - 13
8. **Councillors as Foster Carers**  
**Report - Councillors as Foster Carers. June 2023** 14 - 16
9. **Complaints Update**  
To receive a verbal update on the complaints received by the Monitoring Officer.

Date Published: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023  
Denise Park, Chief Executive

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE Wednesday, 29 March 2023

**PRESENT** – Councillors, Parwaiz Akhtar (Chair), S Ali, J Casey, K Connor, S Desai, L Salton, E Whittingham.

**ALSO PRESENT** – Paul Fletcher & Daniel Wilde

**OFFICERS** – Asad Laher & Shannon Gardiner

### RESOLUTIONS

#### 15 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Neil Slater and Alan Eastwood.

#### 16 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

#### 17 Declaration of Interest

**RESOLVED** – There were no Declarations of Interest received.

#### 18 Register of Interests - Update

The Committee were informed that the new digital process for submitting and updating the Register of Members' Interests was live and ready for Members' to access.

In order to assist Members the Monitoring Officer has put in place arrangements for individual Members to receive guidance when registering their interests, as soon as they are elected to office. The completed register of interest would then be published via the Mod.Gov system. In addition, all members would be requested to notify the Monitoring Officer of any changes, and update the register of interest through the system. An annual reminder will also be sent to all Members to review the register and update any changes.

The Localism Act 2011 requires Members to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of becoming a Member of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs). In addition, if a Member is present at a meeting and they have a DPI in any matter to be considered at the meeting, which is not yet registered, they must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days.

It was noted that a Members interest in any land or property in Blackburn with Darwen would be disclosed and could only be removed in special circumstances as set out in the regulations.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted.

## **19 Member/Officer Protocol - Update**

The Standards Committee regularly reviewed the Council's arrangements for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct. It has previously considered the LGA Mode Code and the recommendations contained in the Committee on Standards in Public Life report on local government ethical standards, and recommended changes to the Code. The Council's values and behaviours have been adopted following extensive consultation with staff across all service areas. A Member Training session on 'New Values & Behaviours' was held also on 12 October 2022, which also discussed the Council's values & behaviours with Elected Members.

The newly adopted values and behaviours would be modernised and personalised for Members which will be brought back to the next Standards Committee to be approved and recommend any amendments to full council for approval.

### **RESOLVED –**

- That the update be noted
- That the values for Members be updated and submitted to the next Committee

## **20 Member Training Update**

The Committee were updated of the Member Training Programme for 2022/2023. The programme included items that the Committee considered mandatory and areas that the committee considered necessary for members to be aware of in carrying out their duties as a Councillor.

The Committee agreed the continuation for all Members to undertake the mandatory e-learning packages: Civil Contingencies for Elected Members, DOJO Cyber Security Awareness and Information Governance for Elected Members. The Committee also approved for Equality & Diversity Training be arranged 'in person' during the course of this municipal year.

The Committee also endorsed a message to all members to take the opportunity to review the LGA elected member course portfolio accessible direct to them via the MeLearning Portal, and access the training and development which they consider would best assist their continued effectiveness as a councillor.

Finally, the Committee also approved an outline local programme of additional 'online' and 'in person' training events as set out in the Appendix to this report to support elected members of the Borough to fulfil their duties and responsibilities as a councillor.

The Committee requested reporting of councillor's attendance on training courses provided, particularly the DOJO Cyber Security Awareness and Information Governance for Elected Members mandatory courses. The attendance levels were varied and councillors need to be further encouraged attend, particularly the online courses. In relation to the mandatory DOJO Cyber Security Awareness and Information Governance for Elected Members

mandatory courses, IG officers arranged special training sessions (via MS Teams) for those councillors who were unable to undertake their training via the MeLearning portal. Two in-person sessions on the important topic of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion were held in February 2023 as well as an in-person session in October 2022 in relation to the Council's New Values & Behaviours, hosted by the Chief Executive.

It was noted that Members found that hybrid meetings were more suitable and also had a better attendance. Furthermore, when a Member was unable to attend the training session they could watch the recording at a later date and also refer back for clarification.

It was suggested that a training session on Social Media be added to the Member Training Programme.

**RESOLVED** – That a further report will be presented to the Committee at the next meeting to consider the Member Training Programme for 2023/24.

**21 Work Program Discussion**

The Committee discussed its work programme for 2023/24. The Committee is encouraged to set a work programme for the year which provide information in an open and transparent manner on the focus of its business. Setting work programmes is considered best practice.

The Committee agreed that Members Interest and Members Protocol would be part of the work programme for 2023/24. It was noted that the Monitoring Officer would forward suggestions for the work programme and the Members would choose which topics they felt were most appropriate for the Committee.

**RESOLVED** – That the work programmed for 2023/34 be agreed.

**22 Complaints Update**

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on complaints that had been received since December 2022.

It was noted that 3 complaints had been received regarding one Councillor. One of the complaints was shortly due to be completed. However, the further 2 complaints were still going through the process which should be resolved by the next committee meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted.

**23 Any Other Business**

The Chair thanked the Members of the Committee for attending the last meeting of the municipal year.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
at which the minutes were confirmed





<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>The Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>TO:</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>ON:</b>	<b>22 June 2023</b>

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**SUBJECT: Member Training – 2023/24**

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## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To review the Member Training 2022/23 and consider the training programme for 2023/24.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standards Committee is requested to:

2.1 Consider the following mandatory courses:

- Information Governance for Elected Members
- DOJO Cyber Security Awareness for Elected Members.

2.2 Encourage all Members to review the LGA elected member course portfolio now accessible via the MeLearning Portal and access the training and development, which they consider would best assist generally in their role as a councillor and in their specific responsibilities.

2.3 Review the local training programme delivered in for 2022/23 (**Appendix 1**) and consider the outline local training programme for 2023/24 (**Appendix 2**)

## 3. BACKGROUND

The Standards Committee has a key role in directing the provision of member development in order to ensure that elected members receive training, which meets their needs as decision makers and ward councillors. The Committee therefore reviews and updates the training and development needs each year, and considers the training programme. The programme includes items that the Committee consider mandatory and areas that it also feels necessary for members to be aware of in carrying out their duties generally as a Councillor and in their specific roles.

## 4. RATIONALE

The Council offers online MeLearning e-learning facility as part of a blended approach to learning, which the Committee has previously endorsed. The

MeLearning portal has a selection of courses available to all Members. On-line training (via MeLearning and MS Team presentations) provided a vital training method during the pandemic for ensuring members kept up to date with key areas of their role.

In addition to the constitutional requirement for elected members sitting on Planning & Highways and Licensing Committees, two other essential training courses were made available 'online' specifically for councillors:

- DOJO Cyber Security Awareness
- Information Governance for Elected Members

All elected members were expected to undertake and refresh their training in these areas. The Committee is requested to consider the continuation of the essential courses relating to Information Governance and DOJO Cyber Security Awareness, and method of learning that best delivers the outcomes. The Committee will be aware of the importance of these courses for both officer and councillors who use the Council's IT systems to undertake their roles. As attendance levels were varied in relation to the mandatory DOJO Cyber Security Awareness and Information Governance for Elected Members mandatory courses, IG officers arranged special training sessions (via MS Teams) for those councillors who were unable to undertake their training via the MeLearning portal.

The MeLearning portal offers a number of generic e-courses available to elected members and staff, including the following courses produced by the Local Government Association (LGA) specifically targeted at Councillors:

1. Commissioning of Services
2. Community Engagement & Leadership
3. Councillor Induction
4. Equality & Diversity
5. Facilitation & Conflict Resolution
6. Handling Complaints for Service Improvement
7. Handling Intimidation
8. Holding Council Meetings Online
9. Influencing Skills
10. Licensing & Regulation
11. Local Government Finance
12. Planning
13. Police & Crime Panels
14. Scrutiny for Councillors
15. Stress Management & Personal Resilience
16. Supporting Mentally Healthier Communities
17. Supporting your Constituents
18. The Effective Ward Councillor

These relevant courses can be accessed by Members at any time and at their convenience.

In addition to the above, a local training programme will also be offered for 2023/24. These will include briefings and presentations delivered online (MS Teams), in-person, or through the 'hybrid' method where an in-person event can be joined remotely by other councillors. A number of these briefings and presentations were delivered during 2022/23 (**Appendix 1**) and following consultation with senior officers a number of topics have been identified for 2023/24 (**Appendix 2**), which the Committee is requested to consider.



## 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Members are expected to ensure they are regularly updated with the necessary knowledge of key legislation relating to their work as Councillors as well as their specific roles. This is particularly important to enable Councillors to make informed decisions. The training and development opportunities detailed in this report would assist in the delivery of that objective. In addition, there is a constitutional requirement for elected members sitting on Planning & Highways and Licensing Committee to have received up to date training.

Attendance at mandatory courses whilst not being a legal requirement as Councillors handle data, it is recommended by the Information Commissioner's Office.

## 6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Member training and development is necessary for providing elected members with key knowledge to enable them to undertake their public roles. The Council should therefore put in place adequate provision for training and development for its members (particularly the newly elected members), and provide support and encouragement to members to undertake the training provided.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The courses that are developed and accessible through e-learning represent an effective and efficient use of digital technology. The training that is delivered in-person for better engagement, require the investment of time and resources from senior officers and the Governance team.

## 9. CONSULTATIONS

The Committee holding a key role in member training and development and will be considering the Member Training programme for 2023/24. Chief Officers will also be consulted for topics of training relating to their operational areas.

### Chief Officer/Member

Contact Officer: Asad Laher, Deputy Director – Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer.

Date: 9 June 2023

Background Papers: None

## Member Training 2022/23

Date	Event	Time & Venue/online	Presented/Led by
7 September 2022	Council Tax Collection and Benefits		Andy Ormerod
19 October 2022	Local Government Finance: Session One: Financial Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan.		Dean Langton
12 October 2022	New Values & Behaviours (link with the Code of Conduct & Member: Officer protocol) – in person		Denise Park
30 November 2022	Elections Changes (confirmed)		Denise Park
7 December 2022	Risk Management		Jen Czapla (Zurich)
16 January 2023	Emergency Planning, Business Continuity, Communications and H&S. (Teams)	Teams	Sarah Riley / Jenna Russett-Knott
25 January 2023	Local Government Finance: Session Two: Local Government Finance Settlement	Teams	Dean Langton
2 February 2023	EDI Training (in person)	TH/2/A (Meeting Room A)	External Provider (Mandy Singh)
8 February 2023	EDI Training (in person)	TH/2/A (Meeting Room A)	External Provider (Mandy Singh)
21 February 2023	IG / Cyber Security	Teams	Lee Gardiner

23 February 2023	IG / Cyber Security	Teams	Lee Gardiner
<b>TBC</b> 2023	Health & Care Integration. Briefing: Health & Care Act 2022 and the Role of Health and Wellbeing Boards in the New System Architecture <b>(Mark Warren / Claire Richardson to provide a paragraph to include in email to Members)</b>	<b>Mark/Claire are not available to carry out the training in February</b>	Mark Warren / Claire Richardson
8 March 2023	Capital Borrowing & Treasury	TH/2/A (Meeting Room A)	Dean Langton
15 March 2023	Highways - Envirocrime & Enforcement	TH/2/A (Meeting Room A)	Tony Watson
<b>TRAINING SCHEDULE FROM APRIL 2023</b>			
	Training on Safeguarding		Joanne Siddle
	Corporate Parenting		Joanne Siddle
	Schools/Education – Supporting Vulnerable Learners		Joanne Siddle



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>The Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>TO:</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>ON:</b>	<b>22 June 2022</b>

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**SUBJECT: Standards Committee Work Programme 2023/24**

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## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To establish the work programme of the Standards Committee for 2023/24.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested to consider the work programme for 2023/24, as outlined in this report.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The Standard's Committee's role and function is contained in the constitution, which includes monitoring the operation of the Council's standards arrangements and to make such recommendations to the Council as the Committee considers appropriate with respect to:

- the promotion and maintenance of high standards in the conduct of council and Parish/Town Councils business, and in the conduct of Members;
- the maintenance and review of a Code of Conduct for Members of the Council, together with such other code, procedure, protocol or guidance as the Committee considers to be appropriate and to make recommendations to the Council on such codes and regulations;
- the provision of training, guidance and assistance for Members in relation to the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and any other such code, procedure or protocol.

The Committee could consider the following areas/topics and make appropriate recommendations:

- Member's Code of Conduct: consider any update to the BwD Member's Code of Conduct and consider adoption of the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct for Members.
- Register of Member's Interests.
- Arrangements for dealing complaints made against councillors: consider and review of existing procedure.
- Protocol on Member/Officer relations: consideration and review of the existing protocol.
- Guidance on Personal References
- Development of Planning Protocol for Members
- Gifts & Hospitality Guidance for Members

- Social Media Guidance for Members
- Use of Council Resources Guidance for Members
- Review of DBS Procedures for Members

Standing items would be the Monitoring Officer's report on Member Complaints and any national standards issues/update.

The Committee is invited to also consider any other areas/topics it would wish to include in the 2023/24 work programme.

#### **4. RATIONALE**

In addition to considering standing items such as the Monitoring Officer's report on member complaints and any national standards issues/update, the Committee is encouraged to set a work programme for the year, which provide information in an open and transparent manner on the focus of its business. Setting work programmes is also considered best practice.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council has a duty under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and to adopt a code of conduct that is consistent with the Nolan Principles. A planned work programme to deal with the specific roles and functions of the Committee, as set out in the constitution, will assist in compliance with this duty.

#### **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **8. CONSULTATIONS**

None.

#### **Chief Officer/Member**

Contact Officer: Asad Laher, Deputy Director – Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer.

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Background Papers: None



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>The Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>TO:</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>ON:</b>	<b>22 June 2023</b>

**SUBJECT: Councillors as Foster Carers**

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- To inform the Standards Committee that Councillor Vicky McGurk (Executive Member for Finance & Governance) has notified the Monitoring Officer of becoming a Foster Carer for BwD.
- To provide assurance to the Standards Committee that appropriate advice has been provided to Councillor McGurk and the necessary arrangements in place to avoid any potential conflict of interest and safeguard against other risks to the Council or the Councillor.
- To consider other arrangements necessary to facilitate councillors who wish to become foster carers with BwD.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- Note that Councillor Vicky McGurk had applied and has been accepted as a Foster Carer for BwD.
- Note that the Monitoring Officer has issued appropriate advice/guidance to Councillor McGurk to avoid any potential conflict of interest and safeguard against other risks to the Council or the Councillor.
- Consider any other arrangements that if feels should be in place to avoid any potential breach of the Member's Code of Conduct.

## 3. BACKGROUND

Foster carers are a valuable resource to the council and play a vital role in providing safe and supportive homes for children in care. Children who need to be fostered often have complex family histories and require foster carers who are highly skilled to meet their needs. Councillors will often possess the necessary skills, understanding and motivation to become foster carers.

However, whilst councillors can become foster caring for the same local authority appropriate safeguards need to be in place to avoid any potential conflict of interest and safeguard against other risks to the Council or the Councillor. In addition, other considerations include confidentiality & access to information, maintenance of objectivity, complaints procedures and their employment status as foster carers. Furthermore, the Council's usual processes and procedures for foster carers will apply, which councillors providing foster care should follow.

Councillor McGurk has updated her public Register of Interest to record the fact that she is a foster carer for BwD, having entered in to a Foster Care Agreement with the Council. Councillor McGurk is also the Executive Member for Finance & Governance, and in accordance with the advice provided by the Monitoring Officer any executive decisions solely within the Finance & Governance portfolio that directly relate to fostering shall be taken by the Leader. At Executive Board, Councillor McGurk has been advised to consider (and seek any advice on agenda items), and withdraw from the meeting before any decisions relating to foster care are considered. Similarly, Councillor McGurk has been advised to consider and seek any necessary advice on agenda items at other council and committee meetings.

The Monitoring Officer and the Strategic Director for Children's & Education will continue to review and ensure that the necessary processes and arrangements are in place to safeguard against any potential to the Council or Councillors who put themselves forward to provide fostering care to children in BwD.

#### **4. RATIONALE**

The Committee has a role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct and make appropriate recommendations to Council in this regard. This includes monitoring all relevant procedures and processes, in order to facilitate arrangements for councillors who wish to put themselves forward to provide a much needed service.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities have functions and duties in relation to a Looked After Child, with an overarching general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. This includes care planning and in many cases arranging foster care for looked after children. Foster carers, when approved enter into a Foster Care Agreement with Council, which sets out the expectations of foster carers, the offer and support, and training foster carers can expect.

Although there have been some legal cases relating to their status, foster carers are not employees of the Council. Therefore, councillors (subject to the approval process) are able to enter into and Foster Care Agreement with same local authority. However, any potential conflicts of interest need to be considered and arrangements put in place to avoid such risks. This includes consideration of any additional special responsibilities an individual councillor holds. Councillors applying to become foster carers should also be provided with the necessary advice in complying with their obligations under the foster care agreement whilst holding their public role as an elected member of the same local authority.

In addition to the Member's Code of the Conduct, Councillors must also comply with the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, and in particular the advice note contained in Appendix A.

#### **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

A good governance framework in local authorities is necessary to promote and maintain high ethical standards, and to ensure public confidence. In this regard,

where councillors wish to become foster carers for the same local authority, the Council must ensure it has considered its processes and procedures, and adequate safeguards are put in place to protect the Council and the Councillor.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

The Committee has a role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct, and should be informed and consulted on arrangements that are put in place to avoid any potential breach of the Member's Code of Conduct.

### **Chief Officer/Member**

Contact Officer: Asad Laher, Deputy Director – Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer.

Date: 8 June 2023

Background Papers: None