

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 25 September 2024

PRESENT – Councillors, Councillor Ehsan Raja (Chair), Casey, Fletcher, Khan, Slater N and Whittingham.

OFFICERS -

RESOLUTIONS

13 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Anthony Shaw & Kevin Connor.

Apologies were also received from Alan Eastwood, Les Cade & Daniel Wilde.

14 **Declarations of Interest**

RESOLVED – There were no Declarations of Interest received.

15 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th June 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

16 **Member Training**

The Member Training programme for 2024/25 was agreed by the committee at the last meeting held on 26th June 2024. It was noted that training sessions had already taken place such as, Scrutiny training, which was presented by an external provider, the mandatory training sessions for Information Governance and DOJO Cyber Security.

The Member Training programme was divided into 3 sections for Members, mandatory training, recommended training and briefing sessions. Various sessions took place online via Teams to make the training more accessible for Members. It was highlighted that attendance had increased since moving to a hybrid approach.

Members of the Standards Committee were advised that if Councillors have not completed the mandatory training sessions, then group leaders would be informed, and they would raise it with those individuals who were yet to complete the training.

Corinne McMillian, Director of HR, advised the Members that further sessions for Information Governance and DOJO Cyber Security will be scheduled in the next couple of months to assist those Members who need to complete the training. These sessions will take place face to face.

RESOLVED – That the update is noted.

17 Update on Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

It was approved at Council Forum on 25th July 2024 for all Elected Members to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS).

The approval came from a recommendation from the Government that all Councillors undertake a DBS check for the reputational benefits for the Council and to ensure public confidence in political representatives.

Members highlighted that they already undertook yearly DBS checks due to their nature of employment and questioned whether they would have to go through the process again. It was noted that if Members have a yearly DBS check through the update service, then the Member needs to provide their reference number to HR, and it would be checked to see if it meets the new requirements.

The DBS checks were being carried out in stages and each Councillor will receive an email when they need to complete the check or bring documentation in to be verified.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

18 Members Code of Conduct

A report was submitted to consider and review the Members Code of Conduct, in view of the implementation of Enhanced DBS checks for Election Members.

The Council at its meeting on 25 July 2024 resolved to implement Enhanced DBS checks for all Elected Member. For the Enhanced DBS checks to be undertaken it will require cooperation and consent from all elected members. Cooperation and various consents will continue to be required following the outcome of the checks. This includes consent to share result with specified Chief Officers, confidential discussion with the respective Group Leader (or Chief Executive in the absence of a Group Leader), and accepting any recommendations made.

It was highlighted that the Code of Conduct should be reviewed and updated to reflect the implementation of the Council's resolution to require Enhanced DBS checks of all elected members. It may also be necessary for the Standards Committee to be involved in considering results of Enhanced DBS checks and make their own appropriate recommendations. It was suggested that this is delegated to the Hearings Panel of the Standards Committee and a procedure be prepared for the Panel to follow, when considering such matters.

RESOLVED –

- That the Members Code of Conduct be amended, and the amended Code be forwarded to full Council for approval

- Recommend that full Council delegate authority to the Hearings Panel of the Standards Committee to consider any breaches of the Code of Conduct arising from the implementation of Enhanced DBS checks for Elected Members
- Recommend that full Council delegate authority to the Standards Committee to adopt a procedure for the Hearings panel to follow when considering such matters

19 Complaints Update

The Monitoring Officer, Asad Laher, updated the committee on complaints that had been received since the last committee in June 2024.

It was noted that 1 complaint was being investigated which involved two Members on social media.

The process for dealing with Members complaints is published on the Council's website for Members and Public to view.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed