

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 21st 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 Code of Conduct 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