

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 18 March 2019

PRESENT – Councillors Afzal(Chair), Liddle, McGurk, Slater and Parish
Councillor Daniel Wilde.

ALSO PRESENT – Stewart Wright (Independent Person)

OFFICERS - David Fairclough, Asad Laher and Phil Llewellyn

RESOLUTIONS

1 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Paul Fletcher, Tassadq Hussain, and Councillors Julie Slater, Julie Gunn and Jamie Groves.

2 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th January 2019**

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record, with the inclusion of Daniel Wilde as being in attendance.

Under Matters Arising, following discussion on DBS checks for Councillors, David Fairclough advised that the Policy would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in June, and then a report would be submitted to Council Forum in July. The position on Enhanced Checks for Councillors would be checked with the Secretary of State in the meantime.

3 **Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda**

No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

4 **Standards Complaints Update Report**

A report was submitted which updated Members on complaints received regarding Members conduct under the arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members.

Between Friday 21st December 2018 and Friday 1st March 2019 there had been no complaints received under the Members Complaints Procedures.

Councillor Neil Slater referred to a current issue that affected the attendance of Conservative Members at training events. David Fairclough advised that the particular issue raised would be discussed at a meeting later in the week where it was hoped the matter would be resolved outside of any formal process.

RESOLVED – That the update report be noted.

5 **Handling Vexatious Complaints and the Code of Practice**

The Committee received a report on the handling of vexatious complainants

and potential updates to the Arrangements for dealing with complaints in respect of Members Code of Conduct.

During the members training programme this year (2018/19) the Corporate Complaints Manager delivered a presentation to Councillors on how they may initially handle unreasonable complainants.

The Committee also requested in July 2018 that as part of the work programme, the issue of the handling of vexatious complaints in the context of the Arrangements for dealing with Complaints in respect of the Members code of Conduct also be considered.

This was because the Committee had felt that the number of vexatious complainants was increasing and whilst these complaints continued to be addressed correctly under the code of conduct, pending the conclusion of the initial assessment process, this often impacted negatively on those councillors who are the subject of the complaints and also waste scarce administrative resources initially handling the complaints.

Under the Code the issue of vexatious complainants is addressed in the initial assessment stage of the process although there was little guidance to the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee was asked note the advice in the report on the handling of unreasonable/vexatious complainants applied to wider complaints and consider what, if any potential updates to the Arrangements for dealing with complaints in respect of Members Code of Conduct, should be considered.

RESOLVED – That the information on vexatious complaints in respect of the Members Code of Conduct be noted.

6 Local Government Ethical Standards

The Committee received the now published Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life on Local Government Ethical Standards.

The report provided a series of recommendations related to potential changes to this framework.

The information provided was for information only at this point and would require primary legislation in order to change current arrangements.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed

