

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 21 JANUARY 2019**

**PRESENT:-** Councillor Teresa Page (Chair), Councillor Vera Tomlinson (Vice-Chair), Councillor Stephanie Exell, Councillor Fionuala Foley, Councillor Janine Howarth, Councillor Steve Weisinger, Councillor Caryl Sydney-Smith (Deputy), Mr Trevor Davies, Mick Compton, Richard Hailstone and Mr Paul Morris.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jane Milner-Barry and Mr Keith Strickland.

### **10. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

### **11. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **12. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **13. Exempt Items - Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved - That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to in the items listed below on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the respective paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraph Nos.</u>	<u>Minute No.</u>
8	1 and 2	16

### **14. Question and Answer Session - Leader of the Council and Chief Executive**

The Chair advised the meeting that, due to unforeseen personal circumstances, the Chief Executive was unable to attend the meeting.

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, advised the meeting of his view that standards issues within the Council continued to be well monitored under the auspices of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer, that effectiveness being evidenced in the fact of only a single code of conduct complaint being submitted during 2018/19.

Members were given the opportunity to put questions to the Leader.

In response to a questions put by Mr Hailstone and Councillor Fionuala Foley, the Council's Acting Director of Law and Monitoring Officer advised the meeting of the arrangements in place to provide Monitoring Officer cover for the Authority, until such a time as a new Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) is appointed. At the request of members, he also expanded on the changed role of that officer from that of the former post of Director of Law and Democratic Services.

In response to questions and observations put by Councillors Janine Haworth and Steve Weisinger, regarding the Council's induction training for new members, the Leader confirmed his own wish that training programmes, including the induction training programme, should be enhanced to best meet the requirements of members. He agreed that the members' suggestions of more information being provided in relation to the Council's governance arrangements and the layout of the civic campus would be appropriate additions to the training and development programme, to be compiled in the next few weeks.

Resolved – That the Leader of the Council be thanked for attending the meeting and for his full and open responses to members questions on matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity.

## **15. Ethical Framework Update**

The Committee received a report from the Director of Law and Democratic Services providing an update on matters relating to the Ethical Framework, including:

- Dispensations
- Summary of Code of Conduct Complaints
- Member Training
- Consideration of any recommended updates to Codes and Protocols
- Update to the Council's Ethical Audit Self-Assessment
- Changes to Chief Executive Reporting Structure
- Council subscription to 'Protect' (formerly 'Public Concern at Work')

The Chair and officers present responded to questions put by Councillors Vera Tomlinson, Fionuala Foley, Steve Weisinger and Steph Exell and Mr Richard Hailstone regarding:

- The reasons for the significant increases in the number of Code of Complaints received in 2017/18, as detailed in the schedule included in the report.
- The Council's guidelines for the granting of dispensations to members in dealing with matters of Council Tax and whether these guidelines can be applied to Parish Councillors.
- The Council's Whistleblowing Policy and the renewal of the Council's subscription to the Public Concern at Work Helpline (now known as 'Protect') to provide a formal method of confidential reporting for staff who do not feel able to raise issues directly with the Council.
- The Council's Learning and Development programme for its Councillors and the position regarding the attendance at training events by Parish

Councillors.

- The Council's "Members Planning Code of Good Practice" and, more specifically, the arrangements for Parish Council representatives to address the Planning Committee on individual planning applications.

Resolved – (1) That the Ethical Framework update be noted, including dispensations granted to members of the Borough Council, the Summary of Code of Conduct complaints, the latest position regarding member training and development within the Borough, and the changes to the Chief Executive Reporting Structure.

(2) That, in light of submissions received following consultation, the Committee determines that, subject to the issue set out in (3) below, the Council's various Codes and Protocols remain fit for purpose and do not require to be amended at this time.

(3) That, with regard to members' comments responding to the concerns expressed by some Parish Councils about their role at Planning Committee meetings as statutory consultees, the Corporate Governance Review Working Group, or other appropriate consultation forum, be asked to consider the Council's Planning Protocol and whether this should be revised to clarify the role of Parish Council representatives attending Planning Committee to present Parish considerations and the nature and extent of those representatives' opportunity to address the Committee on issues of concern in furtherance of the planning decision making process.

(4) That the Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be endorsed.

(5) That the Council's subscription to the 'Protect' service be continued.

(6) That the list of training events annexed to the report be amended to reflect the number of training courses, particularly relating to decision making and governance, that were necessarily cancelled due to the absence of the Director of Law and Democratic Services through ill health.

## **16. Ethical Compliance Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services regarding the outcome of various ethical compliance matters, including the details of any Whistleblowing cases, breaches of the Member / Officer Protocol, and Code of Conduct complaints received since the last Committee, and the outcome of any completed investigations in relation to these.

Resolved – That the Ethical Compliance report be noted.