

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Caryl Sydney-Smith (Chair), Councillor Claire Crilly, Councillor Stephanie Exell, Councillor Janine Howarth, Councillor Steve Weisinger, Mr Trevor Davies, Mick Compton, Richard Hailstone and Mr Keith Strickland (Independent Person).

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor Roger Smith, Councillor Vera Tomlinson, Mr David Dawson and Mr Paul Morris (Independent Person).

10. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

11. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st July 2019 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>
7	1 and 2	15

14. Ethical Framework Update

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Legal Officer which provided an update on the following matters relating to the Ethical Framework and issues of probity in the Council.

Dispensations

The Committee noted that no dispensations had been requested by Councillors since its last meeting.

Membership of the Standards Committee

Parish Representatives

The Committee noted that the recruitment process for Parish Representatives to the Standards Committee will continue in its current form whereby two representatives are nominated by the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils Swindon Area Committee, and confirmed by Council at its Annual General Meeting. Messrs Mike Compton (Blunsdon) and Richard Hailstone (Haydon Wick) have been reappointed until May 2020.

Summary of Code of Conduct Complaints

The Committee noted the summary of Code of Conduct complaints, set out in the table at paragraph 3.6 of the report.

Independent Remuneration Panel - Membership

The Committee noted that Mr Gus Strang, the Education Sector Representative, submitted his resignation to the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel on 20th June 2019. Mr David Body, previously appointed to the Panel as a Lay Representative, has indicated his willingness to transfer to the position of Education Sector Representative given his current employment at Oxford Brookes University. The Committee is asked to appoint Mr Body to the Panel as the Education Sector Representative for a period of four years, ending in November 2023.

The Committee also noted the work undertaken so far to recruit a replacement Lay Representative.

The Council's Codes and Protocols

The Committee was invited to consider whether the Council's various Codes and Protocols remained fit for purpose. In accordance with the Committee's previously utilised review process, the Monitoring Officer was asked to consult on each of the Codes and Protocols with relevant officers, the political groups on the Council, and also with the Parish and Town Councils, and report back to the Standards Committee at its meeting on 27th January 2020.

In considering this item, the following matters were discussed:

- The process by which both Members and Officers declare accepted gifts that are then logged in a publically available register. The Committee noted that Members and Officers are not expected to declare gifts and hospitality which are offered but declined. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would be requested to investigate if other Local Authorities have this requirement, for the Committee to discuss in more detail at its meeting on 27th January 2020.
- That the Officer Code of Conduct does not appear to contain explicit references to the limitations on politically restricted posts. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would take this matter away for review.
- That the Media Guidelines for Councillors could be enhanced and include reference to the matter of bullying via social media. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would take this matter away for review.

Update to the Council's Ethical Audit Self-Assessment

The Committee was invited to review the annual Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis, attached at Appendix 2 to the report. It was agreed that the Desktop Audit should be endorsed without amendment.

Member Training

The Committee considered and noted the details of the training and development events planned for the 2019-20 Municipal Year, attached at Appendix 3 to the report. A log of member attendance at these events will be kept and reported to this Committee at its meeting in March 2020.

The Committee was advised that parish councillors are able to attend training sessions as advertised in the Members Bulletin. The details of parish councillor attendance will be kept and reported to this Committee at its meeting in March 2020.

The reasons behind the recent cancellation of some member training events were discussed and noted.

Resolved – (1) That the Ethical Framework Update, including dispensations granted to members of the Borough Council, the co-option of Parish Representatives on to the Committee, the Summary of Code of Conduct complaints, and the latest position regarding councillor training and development within the Borough be noted.

(2) That the appointment of Mr David Body as the Education Sector Representative on the Swindon Independent Remuneration Panel be endorsed for a period of four years, ending in November 2023.

(3) That, in order to facilitate the Standards Committee's annual review of the Council's Codes and Protocols, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, the Monitoring Officer be asked to consult on each document with relevant officers, the political groups on the Council, and with Parish and Town Councils, and recommend any valid changes to the Standards Committee at its meeting on 27th January 2020.

(4) That, further to (3) above, members of the Committee be invited to submit to the Monitoring Officer the details of any particular issues that they would wish to be considered as part of the annual review of the Codes and Protocols.

(5) That, further to (3) above, the Monitoring Officer be asked to:

- Investigate if other Local Authorities have a requirement upon Members and Officers to declare gifts that were offered and declined;
- Review whether the Officer Code of Conduct should contain explicit reference to the limitations on politically restricted posts;
- Review and enhance the Media Guidelines for Councillors by including reference to the matter of bullying via social media;

and report the findings to this Committee at its meeting on 27th January 2020.

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

15. Ethical Compliance Report

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Legal Officer 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.

The process for submitting complaints regarding Parish Clerks was discussed and noted.

Resolved – That the Ethical Compliance report be noted.