

Minutes of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	13 September 2021
Present:	Councillor T Pickstone (in the Chair) Councillors S Butler, R Bernstein, M Hayes, G Staple Jones, L Smith, M Whitby and Y Wright
Also in Attendance:	Jacqui Dennis – Council Monitoring Officer Julie Gallagher – Head of Democratic Services
Apologies:	Councillor Rafiq
Public Attendance:	No members of the public were present at the meeting.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted by

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 13th January 2021 be approved.

4. MATTERS ARISING

A) CODE OF CONDUCT

Jacqui Dennis, Council Monitoring Officer updated Members on the development of a revised Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer reported that the Local Government Association had issued updated guidance on a new model code of conduct, most recently in July 2021.

Colleagues from across Greater Manchester have agreed to look to adopt a Code of Conduct across all ten Greater Manchester Authorities, including the Combined Authority. It is envisaged that a draft code of conduct will be considered at the next meeting of the Standards Committee for onward consideration at Council on 24th November 2021.

B) FEEDBACK FROM STANDARDS HEARING PANEL

Following the recently undertaken Standards Hearings Panel Members were asked for their feedback and the following issues were raised:

- Following the appeal to inform members of the public; the decision notice on the Council's website, must include an appropriate level of information including details of the complaint as well as any sanctions imposed
- A system for ensuring that a Member sanctions has been complied with and regular update reports are considered at the Standards Committee.
- The standards regime needs greater power with regards to sanctions.
- Members of the public and Elected members need to have confidence and trust in the system

Responding the Council Monitoring Officer reported that a report will be presented to a future meeting of the Standard's Committee providing details of ongoing standards complaints; the report will include details of the complaints received, if they have been resolved, and at what stage.

The Monitoring Officer reported that if a Councillor fails to comply with the sanctions that has been administered by the Panel this may result in a further complaint to the Standards Committee.

It was agreed, that

An Elected Member Complaints Reports will be considered at the Standards Committee scheduled to be held in January 2022.

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT

The Monitoring Officer presented a verbal update in relation to the Local Governments Ombudsman Annual review, an accompanying report had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting providing details of;

- Statistics on the number of complaints upheld against the Council.
- Complaints per service area
- Annual Review Letter
- Future developments

Responding to a Member's question, the Monitoring Officer reported that work is underway across the Council to strengthen the Council responses at Stage 2 of the complaints process. It is hoped that this will lead to more rigour and oversight of complaints at this stage and thus preventing and avoid escalation of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Monitoring Officer reported that a detailed breakdown down of complaints for each service area of the Directorates can be provided to Elected Members.

It was agreed,

- (a) That the content of the Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter to the Council be noted
- (b) That the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman referred to the Council during 2020/21 and their outcomes be note

6 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Monitoring Officer reported following discussions at the March Council meeting in which the Council agreed to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel, she provided further information on the proposals to recruit new members of the Panel to advise on a Scheme of Allowances for 2022/23 ahead of the all-out May 2022 Local Elections.

An accompanying report which provided details of the terms of reference and methodology for undertaking the review was circulated to Members ahead of the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer shared with Members a suggested itinerary which included details of those Members and Officers identified for interview as well as a questionnaire that will be shared with all Members.

In discussions that followed the following issues were raised:

- Members wanted to ensure that the times available for interview were flexible
- Could the Panel look if remuneration is a barrier to women becoming Councillors?
- Could the review panel look at maternity/paternity pay
- The Council have been unable to recruit an independent person to the Audit Committee – is this due to the remuneration?

It was agreed, that

The issues raised above by Members of the Standards Committee will be forwarded on to The Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel for their consideration.

7. SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

It was agreed, that

The Following items would be considered at future meetings of the Standards Committee:

15.11.2021 - Constitution update / Code of Conduct

17.1.2022 - Councillor Complaints / Ethical Governance within the Council / Member training

COUNCILLOR T PICKSTONE
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.50 pm)