

Minutes of: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 1 March 2022

Present: Councillor T Pickstone (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, S Butler, M Hayes, L Smith, M Whitby
and J Harris

Also in attendance: J Dennis, Director of Law and Governance
J Gallagher, Head of Democratic Services

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor T Rafiq

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 15th November 2021 be approved.

9 COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Council Monitoring Officer presented a report providing details of Elected Member complaints received by the Monitoring Officer for the period April 2021 – February 2022. The reports includes details of the outcome from the Standards Hearing which took place on 11 & 18th February 2021.

The number of complaints received by the Monitoring Officer in this period has been low. Member are asked to note that three complaints have been received within the last few weeks.

The Monitoring Officer reported that she is unable to identify any emerging themes from the complaints received.

Members discussed the sanctions available to the Standards sub committee once a breach is confirmed. Members expressed concerns that the ultimate sanction is for the electorate to decide, however with limited information in the public domain this is not always possible.

It was agreed That:

1. Members note the contents of the report
2. That Members direct the Monitoring Officer submit an annual report to the standards committee, the report will cover all aspects of governance arrangements.
3. Members note the revised Monitoring officer protocol sets out that complaints will be reported to the standards committee on an annual basis with the annual report.

10 CONSTITUTION REVIEW

The Council's constitution was reviewed and updated during the municipal year 2020/21. In considering the new Constitution, Members agreed that it would be reviewed annually to ensure that the changes proposed as a result of the review were fit for purpose.

Following agreement at Standards Committee and Council in November 2021 Members agreed a work programme for future review see Appendix 1.

The constitution stipulates that oversight of the Council Constitution is a function of the Standards Committee. However, there are particular elements of the Constitution that are pertinent to the work of the Standards Committee that are due for review, namely the Monitoring officer protocol

This protocol has been reviewed considering best practice guidance, current legislative framework and protocols in neighbouring Greater Manchester authorities.

It was agreed:

The Monitoring Officer Protocol would be forwarded to Annual Council with no amendments.

11 MEMBER TRAINING UPDATE

The report sets out all Member Training carried out during the municipal year 2021/22 and provides an overview of the plans for Member Induction following all-out elections in May 2022.

Members discussed the plan.

It was agreed;

The member induction plan would be updated to include a How to be a Councillor update.

12 MEMBER SAFETY GUIDANCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Following the death of the Member of Parliament David Amess, the Chief Executive requested a Member Safety group be established; the membership included – the Labour whip, Conservative whip, Mayor and Councillor Mason. The primary function of the Group was to review current safety guidance supported by the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services; the group met on the 9th December 2021.

Following the member safety group meeting, a draft member safety guidance was circulated with the papers for this meeting. Meeting reviewed the guidance in conjunction with the social media policy.

It was agreed;

That the social media policy be updated to include advice as to what Councillors can do when they are being targeted online.

COUNCILLOR T PICKSTONE
Chair