



Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held on 18 June 2024 when there were present:-

Chair: Cllr A Edwards

Cllr T Copsey
Cllr P Greig
Cllr J Knott

Cllr R Lillis
Cllr N Pachy
Cllr G Watson

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllr B Palmer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M Fuller.

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Hutchings - Chief Executive
A Law - Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)
S Worthington - Democratic Services Manager

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

2 SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) summarising complaints received and determinations in relation to Members' behaviour under the Code of Conduct. It was noted that the complaint dated 3 June 2024 related to a Borough Councillor and not a Town Councillor, as stated in the report.

In response to a Member question as to when the complaint dated 26 February 2024 might be determined, the Monitoring Officer advised that there had been correspondence with the complainant requesting additional information and that by the time all necessary information had been obtained, the pre-Election period had commenced. This particular complaint would be determined

imminently.

Responding to a Member question relating to the complaint dated 14 May 2024, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that advice had been sought from the Independent Person. The Independent Persons were helpful to consult in terms of whether they supported the Monitoring Officer's view and if they thought the suggested response was reasonable. The Independent Persons were also available to support Members who might be the subject of a complaint. The Monitoring Officer confirmed, in response to a supplementary question as to whether the Independent Persons were legally trained, that this wasn't case and that they were lay persons.

In response to a further question around the selection of Independent Persons, the Monitoring Officer advised that she was currently reviewing the appointment of Independent Persons to the Standards Committee and other committees. The Localism Act 2011 contained criteria around Independent Persons that must be followed; however, there was no set selection criteria so the Council could determine that. It was good practice to involve Members in the process and there would be a report to Full Council on the appointment of Independent Persons.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed, in response to another Member question on Independent Persons, that they did not undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Responding to a Member question relating to complaints preceding February 2024, the Monitoring Officer advised that the previous Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer had dealt with any outstanding complaints prior to that time.

In response to a Member question relating to the procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints, as set out in Appendix 2, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that this procedure had been in place for some time and had been updated on the website to reflect current staffing. It was noted that this should be checked for typographical errors, etc.

The Chair asked whether there were any particular aspects around Code of Conduct complaints that the Committee should focus on and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that many complaints related to interaction on social media. She advised that she would like to review the current social media policy and felt that this was something that a Working Group made up of members of this Committee could focus on.

Cllr A Edwards moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr G Watson, that a Working Group of 3 to 4 Members be set up to review the social media policy and this was agreed unanimously.

The Chair asked that nominations to join the Working Group be communicated to him.

Cllr G Watson moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr P Greig, that reports be made to each meeting of the Standards Committee summarising complaints made to the Monitoring Officer and any determinations, and this was unanimously agreed.

Resolved

- (1) That the summary of complaints and determinations from February 2024 to date be noted.
- (2) That a Working Group of 3 to 4 Members be set up to review the social media policy.
- (3) That reports be made to each meeting of the Standards Committee summarising complaints made to the Monitoring Officer and any determinations.

The meeting closed at 7.19 pm.

Chair

Date

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