



Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 3 October 2024 when there were present:-

Chair: Cllr A Edwards

Cllr T Copsey
Cllr M Fuller
Cllr R Lillis

Cllr N Pachy
Cllr D Silk

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllr T Gibson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Knott, Cllr P Greig and Cllr G Watson.

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Hutchings	- Chief Executive
A Law	- Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic Services (MO)
S Worthington	- Democratic Services Manager
H Boyd	- Democratic Services Officer

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic Services (MO) summarising complaints and determinations received in relation to members' behaviour under the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer (MO) explained that the report addressed both new complaints and updates on previously unresolved matters which have now been resolved, noting an increase in complaints, many of which stemmed from social media interactions.

In response to Members' questions regarding complaints coming from specific individuals and whether there was a vexatious policy that they can be held to, the MO confirmed that while a vexatious complaints policy was being developed, it would not alter the process for handling Code of Conduct complaints. The importance of ensuring that even complaints from serial complainants are taken seriously was emphasised. If a complaint meets the threshold, it should not be dismissed, regardless of the source. The MO noted that while the vexatious policy may apply in other areas, it will have limited impact on Code of Conduct complaints.

Members sought clarification regarding a few incidents involving complaints against Town Councillors, one in June and two in August, and whether it was appropriate for these to be dealt with by the Borough Council. The MO confirmed that, under legislation, Town Council complaints fall under the jurisdiction of the Borough Monitoring Officer, making this process appropriate.

Members also queried the differing wording in the last entry of the report. The MO clarified that this complaint was related to a Council service rather than a specific Member and therefore would follow the internal departmental complaints process. It was agreed that such entries would still be included in the report, but that the wording would be made clearer for better understanding.

Resolved

- (1) That the summary of complaints and determinations from February 2024 to date be noted

6 MEMBERS' SKILLS AUDIT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic Services seeking agreement for a Members' Skills Audit Task and Finish Group.

Following the elections, Members participated in an intensive training programme; there was keen interest in gathering feedback to identify any skill gaps that would need addressing. The proposed Task and Finish group would consist of three to four Members to engage with other Members to explore what additional training might be beneficial in the upcoming municipal years.

Members emphasised the importance of assessing the skills that Council Members already possess, noting that many have valuable expertise that could be leveraged within the Council. They expressed their satisfaction with this initiative being included.

Members sought clarification on the terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group, noting that its membership could be drawn from within the Committee. It was clarified that while the group would report to the Standards Committee, its Members could consist of any Castle Point Borough Councillor, not just those from the Standards Committee.

Members also requested Leader and Deputy Leader be updated with regard to this Task and Finish group if taking membership outside of the committee to ensure they also had oversight and relevant information was communicated to those who may want to nominate themselves.

Cllr A Edwards moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr R Lillis, that a Members' Skills Audit Task and Finish Group of 3 to 4 Members be set up to review the current training and advise accordingly. This was agreed unanimously.

The Chair asked that nominations to join the Task and Finish Group be communicated to him and copied to Democratic Services.

Resolved

- (1) That a task and Finish Group of 3 to 4 Members be set up to review the Member training requirements.

The meeting closed at 7:13 pm.

Chair

Date

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