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Standards Committee

20 March 2019

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE,
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 20TH MARCH, 2019 AT 10.00 AM
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, THORPE ROAD, WEELEY**

Present:	Councillors Heaney (Chairman), Bray (Vice-Chairman), Davis, S A Honeywood, Scott and Whitmore
Also Present:	Councillor P B Honeywood
In Attendance:	Lisa Hastings (Head of Governance and Legal Services & Monitoring Officer), Linda Trembath (Senior Solicitor (Litigation and Governance) & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Ian Ford (Committee Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Debbie Bunce (Legal and Governance Administration Officer)
Also in Attendance:	Clarissa Gosling, David Irvine, Jane Watts and John Wolton (all of whom were the Council's appointed Independent Persons)

46. JOHN WOLTON

The Chairman (Councillor Heaney) informed Members that this was the last meeting of the Committee that John Wolton would be attending. On behalf of the Committee she paid tribute to John for his service to the Council as an Independent Person and thanked him for his work and his assistance and advice to the Monitoring Officer and Members of the Council.

Councillor Heaney requested that a formal letter of thanks be sent to Mr Wolton which the Monitoring Officer undertook to arrange.

Mr Wolton thanked Councillor Heaney for her kind words.

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Nicholls (with no substitute) and Steady (with Councillor Davis substituting).

48. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee, held on 16 January 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none on this occasion.

50. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 37

There were none on this occasion.

51. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER - A.1 - MANDATORY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS - ANNUAL UPDATE

There was submitted a report (A.1) by the Monitoring Officer which sought to update the Committee, as part of its agreed work programme, on the current position of mandatory training for Members and named substitute Members of the Council's Audit, Licensing & Registration, Planning and Standards Committees.

The report reiterated the Council's decision and constitutional requirement to make relevant training mandatory for Members, and their named substitutes, in respect of their membership on those committees which provided regulatory type functions. The report also detailed training undertaken and attendance to date.

Appendix A to the report provided details of those Members who had attended the new Code of Conduct training in May 2018. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that due to the type of matters considered by the Standards Committee, each topic involved consideration of the relevant factors and in doing so the Committee received a range of information to take into account. When hearings were required to determine the outcome of Members' Code of Conduct complaints a briefing would be held with the Committee beforehand, though no hearings had been undertaken in 2018/19.

Appendix B to the report provided details of the Planning Committee Mandatory Training for 2018/19. The Committee noted that a range of subjects had been delivered, with concentration on determining applications, the National Planning Policy Framework and Appeals as those sessions were essential to understanding the various considerations to be taken into account by the Planning Committee when making decisions on applications.

Appendix C to the report detailed the training record for the Licensing and Registration Committee. As usual only one session had been delivered (in November 2018) but it had covered a range of topics.

In respect of the Audit Committee the Committee was informed that there had been no formal committee-wide training in 2018/19. However, the Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits & Section 151 Officer had undertaken general Audit Committee induction training for new members of the Committee on a one-on-one basis.

The Committee was reminded that to ensure that the training was successful and the application of the principles was understood by Members, each session tended to have a workshop style question and answer session at the end. This style had been adopted by the Licensing and Registration and Planning Committees' training sessions and had worked well for both Members and officers and had encouraged debate.

Members of the Committee indicated that they would like to see, as part of the post-election Members' Induction arrangements, a repeat of the previous training on overview and scrutiny matters provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny as Members had found it to be very useful and informative.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Heaney and -

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee:

- (a) notes the contents of the report and its Appendices; and

- (b) continues to encourage Members of the Planning, Licensing and Registration and Audit Committees to attend organised mandatory training events in order to comply with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

52. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER - A.2 - ANNUAL REPORT ON DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

There was submitted a report (A.2) by the Monitoring Officer which provided the Committee with an overview on the register of, and declarations of, interests made by Members in the period 25 April 2018 to 19 February 2019. The report provided statistics and related information on -

- 1) the Register of Members' Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (including any specific dispensations granted by the Monitoring Officer);
- 2) declarations of interest at meetings;
- 3) use of blanket dispensations;
- 4) declarations of offers/receipt of gifts and hospitality; and
- 5) updates to Members' Register of Interests.

The data had been collated from the Committee modern.gov IT system and from Members' submissions.

Having considered the information submitted it was moved by Councillor Heaney, seconded by Councillor Scott and:

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

53. DISCUSSION TOPICS AND/OR UPDATES FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER

(1) Quarterly Complaints Update

The Monitoring Officer circulated to the Committee the quarterly schedule, which gave an update on existing cases together with general details of new cases, without providing any names, and went through them with the Committee.

(2) General Notes - Summary of Complaints in the period April 2018 to March 2019

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that a total of 11 complaints had been received during 2018/19 of which five had related to District Councillors and six had related to Town and Parish Councillors. Six complaints had originated from members of the public and five complaints had originated from Councillors.

The Monitoring Officer had decided that five of the complaints merited no further action and that three related to Councillors acting in a private capacity and could not be taken forward. Of the remaining three complaints, two were referred for external investigation and one complaint was pending.

The Monitoring Officer also reported that five complaints had involved the same Councillor and that no Hearings had been held during 2018/19.

(3) Requests for Dispensations

No requests for dispensations had been received since the last meeting of the Committee.

- (4) “The Local Government Ethical Standards Report dated January 2019 following a review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life”

The Committee had before it the published report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) following its review of Ethical Standards in Local Government.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted the salient points contained in the Chairman of the CSPL’s covering letter to the Prime Minister, the Executive Summary of the report, the list of recommendations made by the CSPL and its list of best practice recommendations directed at local authorities.

Having considered and discussed the contents of the report:-

It was moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Scott and –

RESOLVED that –

- (a) the outcome of the review of Ethical Standards in Local Government by the CSPL be noted;
- (b) an update on the progress being made on the implementation of the CSPL’s recommendations, together with the further information requested by Members in respect of recommendation 11 and the list of best practice be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee;
- (c) the Monitoring Officer investigate ways in which the Independent Persons could be kept up-to-date with regard to the cases deemed to require “No Further Action”; and
- (d) with regards to the quarterly complaints update, the Monitoring Officer be requested to give an indication whether multiple complaints had been submitted by an individual member of the public.

- (5) The Committee’s Work Programme for 2019/2020

The Committee gave consideration to its work programme for the 2019/2020 Municipal Year.

Members had before them a suggested work programme which had been submitted by the Monitoring Officer.

It was moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Bray and –

RESOLVED that the annual Work Programme for 2019/2020, as set out below, be approved –

31 July 2019 (provisional date)

- Update on Member Induction – Code of Conduct Training

- Update of the ongoing progress of the implementation of the Review by Committee on Standards in Public Life/further discussion on list of Best Practice
- Quarterly Complaints update by Monitoring Officer

2 October 2019 (provisional date)

- Review of the Complaints Procedure
- Case review and guidance update for the Committee on decisions and actions taken nationally
- Quarterly Complaints update by Monitoring Officer

29 January 2020 (provisional date)

- Update on Mandatory Training
- Quarterly Complaints update by Monitoring Officer

8 April 2020 (provisional date)

- Annual Report on declarations of interest (meetings, gifts and hospitality)
- Work Programme 2020/2021
- Quarterly Complaints update by Monitoring Officer

The Committee was aware that individual matters might be referred to the above meetings by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference as necessary, for example an appeal against a dispensation decision or a code of conduct hearing.

The meeting was declared closed at 11.45 am

Chairman

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