

Contact Officer: Andrea Woodside

KIRKLEES COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 7th March 2018

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Ken Sims
Councillor Mohan Sokhal

In attendance: Samantha Lawton
Julie Muscroft

Apologies: Councillor Shabir Pandor

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies from Cllr S Pandor.

2 Minutes of Previous Meetings

That the minutes of the meetings held on the 17 January 2017, 24 May 2017 and 6 September 2017 were approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No Interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

It was noted that all agenda items would be considered in public session.

5 Deputation/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were asked.

7 Review of Complaints

Committee was presented with a report which outlined the type, nature and number of complaints received since the new arrangements for standards matters were introduced in May 2017. Committee was advised that 12 complaints had been received in relation to the conduct of elected members.

- 4 related to social media posts
- 8 related to communication

Of the 12 complaints 1 complaint is still outgoing.

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In responding to the complaints, the Monitoring Officer followed the arrangements agreed by Council and consulted with the Independent Person to make an informal assessment whether the complaints should proceed.

Committee members felt that the process was working well and discussed whether as part of the complaints process an elected member who had had a complaint made against them should be informed as a matter of course and not just when the complaint had been resolved.

Officers agreed, to look at the process for making members aware that there had been a complaint made against them following a decision from the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person that a complaint would not proceed.

The Committee's view was sought on the current position regarding the Independent Person. Members felt that in terms of capacity it was working well and should the need arise there would be opportunity to draw an Independent Person from another local authority.

RESOLVED -

- a) Officers will look at the process in making members aware there has been a complaint against them following a decision from the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person that the complaint will not proceed.
- b) That the current position regarding one Independent Person continue and be kept under review by Standards Committee.

8 Update on Standards

Standards Committee received a report in respect of the training and support needs of members following the Standards Review and new Code of Conduct to be implemented following Annual Council in May 2017. Different areas of training were put forward including, Council Procedure Rules, Reasonable Behaviour Policy and Social Media. Members were invited to make comment and suggestions on the proposals for training.

The Committee felt that training on the Council Procedure Rules would be beneficial as it would help members become aware of the rules. Members also felt that advance chairing skills should be a priority for the in-coming mayor and deputy mayor and for members chairing public facing committees such as Planning and Standards. Committee discussed whether there was occasion for the mayor to give the deputy mayor an opportunity to chair full council, in preparation for taking over the role. The Committee requested officers establish whether Bradford Council provide any training courses for members (including Mayors) as it has in previous years.

The Committee was advised that training for existing members on the Code of Conduct is currently in development with the intention that it will be online, e-learning. Questions were raised about how this training could be enforced. Committee was advised that the training programme would be online through MiPod as this would provide an evidence base, however it was also important that it is

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discussed at Group meetings. Standard Committee members agreed to trial the new Code of Conduct online training before it is rolled out to existing members.

The Committee was informed that in respect of social media training, during induction members will be advised that while it is a valuable communication medium, there is a need to be mindful of the language used. Councillors to be reminded of the Social Media Guidance.

All councillors elected or re-elected in May 2018, will be expected to sign the Code of Conduct. The intention is to continue with the current arrangement however, new members will be handed a certificate which should to make the process more meaningful.

RESOLVED - That Standards Committee will trial the new online training prior to it being rolled out to existing members.

That officers develop as soon as possible advanced charring skills training for members.

That officers check whether Bradford Council provides training for members (including mayors) and whether this is open to members from other local authorities.

Officers to remind Councillors of the Social Media Guidelines.

That Standards Committee undertake further discussion in relation to the enforcement of training.

9 **Consultation by the Committee on Standards in Public Life To Inform review of Local Government Ethical Standards**

Committee was briefed on the review of Local Government Ethical Standards by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. A consultation document has been issued and the closing date for comment is 18 May 2018. Members were directed to a report which outlined the consultation questions and advised that the Chief Executive would like Kirklees to provide a response. West Yorkshire colleagues were also looking at providing a response.

Committee discussed widening this by taking it back to groups to ensure that all 69 councillors are involved, there was also a suggestion that this should be brought to a meeting of the Democracy Commission for consideration.

RESOLVED - That the consultation be taken back to groups for wider discussion and comment and feedback to the Monitoring Officer.

That Cllr Marchington will discuss setting up a meeting with the Chair of the Democracy Commission to provide comment and feedback on the consultation.