

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

KIRKLEES COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

11 March 2020

Present: Councillor Paul Davies (Chair)
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Mohan Sokhal

In attendance: Mike Stow (Independent Person)

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Pandor.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on the 25 November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

It was noted that Councillors Armer and Bolt were Members of either a Town or Parish Council.

4 Admission of the Public

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

5 Deputation/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were considered.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were asked.

7 Code of Conduct - Complaints Update

The Committee received a report which provided an update on complaints that had been received since the last consideration at the meeting held on 11 September 2019. The Committee was informed that the report is prepared every six months and gives a breakdown of complaints received.

Since the 11th of September 2019 the Monitoring Officer has received 18 complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. This figure includes multiple complaints relating to 1 councillor.

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It was reported that 10 complaints relate to Kirklees Councillors (a total of 11 Councillors) and 8 relate to parish councillors. The number of identified Town or Parish councillors complained about is 6, from 2 Town or Parish Councils.

Of these:

- 3 were not progressed after the initial assessment process
- 1 was dealt with informally.
- The remaining 14 are relatively recent and 9 are currently being investigated before being considered under the initial assessment process, with the remainder being part way through the formal standards process.

The Committee was advised that since the publication of the report a one complaint had been closed taking the numbers being investigated from 9 to 8.

During consideration of the complaints update, Members of the Committee discussed the issue of non-compliance with sanctions and how decisions are publicised. With regard to non-compliance it was suggested that these cases could be publicised to help prevent sanctions being ignored. Councillor Bolt highlighted his view that in effect non-compliance with the sanctions was contrary to the Declaration of Office signed by all new Members, which states they will abide by the Council's Code of Conduct. On the wider issue of how outcomes are reported, the Monitoring Officer explained that decisions are published through the Council's website and it was a matter for the press to decide on whether these are reported in the newspaper. The Chair gave an undertaking that the issue of how the outcomes of complaints are publicised would be further looked at.

RESOLVED - That the report be received and noted.

9 Standards - Cases and News Update

The Committee considered a report which provided information on developments, news and matters of local government ethics, including relevant case law.

The report also included an update on the work of the Committee for Standards in Public Life, who, in a joint exercise with the Jo Cox Foundation, had undertaken a review of individual political parties' Codes of Conduct. The purpose was to create a 'Joint Standard' that would outline a shared understanding of the minimum standards of behaviour expected of all party members.

Furthermore it was reported that the Local Government Association (LGA) had become involved in the drafting of the model Code of Conduct that the CSPL had recommended in their report.

RESOLVED -

- 1) That the report be received and noted.
- 2) That the draft Model Code of Conduct be submitted to the September meeting of this Committee.
- 3) That this Committee wishes to participate in the consultation on the draft model code of conduct that is being prepared by the LGA and delegates

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authority to the Monitoring Officer to draft a response in consultation with members of the Standards Committee and Group Business Managers.