

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

KIRKLEES COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday 23rd March 2023

Present: Councillor Jo Lawson (Chair)
Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Councillor Alison Munro

In attendance: Julie Muscroft, Service Director, Legal, Governance and
Commissioning
Michael Stow – Independent Person

Apologies: Councillor Mohan Sokhal
Councillor Michael Watson

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Sokhal and Councillor Watson.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

3 Interests

Councillor Munro declared an other interest in respect of item 6, Code of Conduct complaints update, as a Parish Councillor.

4 Admission of the Public

It was agreed that all agenda items would be held in public session.

5 Deputation/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Code of Conduct complaints update

The Committee received a report which provided an update on complaints that had been received since the previous meeting of the Committee on the 10th October 2022. The Committee was informed that the report looked at complaints received from 1st September 2022 to end of February 2023 and gave a breakdown. The report advised that since 1st September 2022 the Monitoring Officer had received 7 complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. All complaints related to Kirklees Councillors. There were no complaints relating to Town or Parish Councillors. Of these 7, 1 had not progressed after the initial assessment process. The remaining 6 complaints were currently being considered under the initial

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assessment process. One member complaint from the previous period had been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman but was dismissed.

In line with the decision of the Committee, published decisions on the website would only show complaints that had been upheld. Members were asked to consider whether it was appropriate to update the information when members had complied with any sanctions.

During consideration of the complaints update, Members of the Committee discussed whether it was appropriate for the published information to be updated to the record when members had complied with any sanctions.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be considered and noted,
- (ii) That Kirklees website be updated when members had complied with any sanctions,
- (iii) That reports to the Committee include an appendix showing decisions taken through the decision-making process,
- (iv) That a workshop be arranged to understand difficulties Officers and Members faced relating to Planning applications.

7 Cases and News Update

The Committee received a report which provided an update on matters arising in terms of local government ethics, including relevant case law and decisions of other local authorities or any existing standards boards. During discussion of a particular case relating to Brighton and Hove Council, Members sought clarification on the size and political make-up of the Council. The Monitoring Officer undertook to find out and report back to the Committee.

The report also provided an update on the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life that followed on from the report on 'Ethical Standards in Local Government.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

8 Interim update on Member-Officer workshop sessions

The Committee received a brief interim update on the recent workshop sessions undertaken on the Member-Officer protocol.

Three sessions took place as part of the review in January and February 2023 which were split across North and South Kirklees. The sessions were run by an independent consultant whose background included extensive experience as a Monitoring Officer and in local authority law, both in the public and private sectors. The sessions were based on encouraging member and officer participation.

During discussion, committee members provided comments on their experience of attending the session, along with some observations about what might be helpful to do moving forwards to embed the corporate knowledge of the protocol and use it to

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work together effectively. They noted that a more comprehensive report would come back to this committee with any proposed changes to the protocol when the work was completed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be considered and noted,
- (ii) That Officers be thanked for arranging the workshops.