

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
4 July 2022

(Present) Councillors Bond (Chairman), Bowden, Hawley, Johnson,
Maloney MBE and McCormack.
(Not Present) Councillors Betts, Murphy, Pearl and Stevenson (Covid
related absence)

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

- * Resolved that Councillor Bond be appointed Chairman.

Councillor Bond here took the Chair.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Murphy, Pearl and Stevenson.

3 MINUTES

- * Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2022 be approved and signed.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS 2022/23

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of Ombudsman cases from 1 April 2022 to 31 May 2022.

The report summarised the number of complaints against the Council determined by the Ombudsman which were explained by the Monitoring Officer.

A question was raised if there was evidence of the Ombudsman not investigating some complaints due to the backlog following the pandemic. The Monitoring Officer responded they were not aware of any formal notification of this from the Ombudsman but would look into the matter further.

- * Resolved that the report be noted.

6 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

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A report was submitted which detailed the training opportunities available to Members and attendance rates from 11 January 2022 to the 16 June 2022, and Member training currently planned for the remainder of 2022/2023.

In accordance with the records held by the Organisational Design and Development Team, 25 briefing/training sessions were delivered during the period of 11 January 2020 to 16 June 2022, including 14 induction sessions for new Members. The sessions were attended by a total of 181 members and detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

In addition to the briefing events detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively, Members also had access to over 1000 e-resources on the Learning Hub, bitesize learning on the IT Learning Support Hub, and e-learning opportunities on the My Learning and LGA platform. These resources were available all via the Council's intranet.

Members asked that the month of August be avoided on the training schedule where possible.

* **Resolved that the report be noted.**

7 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of the Government's response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Review Report.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life ("CSPL") advised the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in England. It monitored and reported on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders. CSPL was an independent advisory non departmental public body. It was responsible for promoting the Seven Principles of Public Life.

In January 2019, the CSPL published a report following its review of Local Government Ethical Standards. The report made recommendations to central government for consideration to strengthen the current standards and conduct framework, some of which would require changes to legislation. The report also made best practice recommendations for local authorities to consider in relation to their local standards arrangements for elected members.

Standards Committee considered the CSPL review report at its meeting held on 2 April 2019. The Committee was advised that a further report would be submitted when the government's response is received in due course.

On 18 March 2022, the Government published its response to the CSPL report, which was attached at Appendix 2. The Government response was to the CSPL's individual recommendations that were directed at the

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Government. This was the first opportunity for the Committee to consider the response since the publication of the Government's response.

* **Resolved that the report be noted.**

8 **REVISED PROTOCOL FOR COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS DEALING WITH PLANNING MATTERS AND RELATED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

A report was submitted which informed Members of proposed revisions to the Protocol for Councillors and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters (known as the Planning Protocol) and related constitutional changes.

The report was also considered and approved by Planning Committee on 28 June 2022 and the agreed comments of Standards Committee and Planning Committee

would then be considered by Council at its meeting to be held on 12 July 2022, prior to its adoption of an updated Protocol and the making of any related constitutional changes.

The Planning Protocol aimed to ensure that, within the planning process, there were no grounds for suggesting that a planning decision taken by officers or Members had been biased, partial or not well founded in any way. The Protocol was a living document and had been the subject of amendment over the years to ensure it reflected current best practice.

* **Resolved that Council be recommended to agree the proposed revisions to the Planning Protocol and related changes to Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.**

9 **UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS AGAINST ELECTED MEMBERS**

A verbal report was made by the Monitoring Officer which updated the Committee on complaints received alleging breaches of the Code of Conduct. Council had delegated powers to the Monitoring Officer to consider complaints and determine if they should be the subject of a full investigation in accordance with the agreed Procedure for Dealing with Complaints regarding breach of the Code. Since January 2022, the Monitoring Officer had received 11 complaints against Members including Parish Councillors, which had been dealt with under delegated powers. All of the complaints were submitted from members of the public. Out of 11 cases, five were concluded at stage 1 of the Procedure which the Monitoring Officer decided not to investigate in accordance with the examples listed in Appendix 1 of the Procedure. One case concluded at stage 2 of the Procedure by way of alternative resolution i.e. informal advice. There were five complaints outstanding.

In answer to questions about Code of Conduct training for parish councillors, the Monitoring Officer confirmed they are in the process of arranging Code of Conduct training for all Parish Councillors. and the option of charging for the training would be considered.

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* Resolved that the verbal update be noted.

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