

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
12 January 2021

(Present) **Councillor Bond (Chair), Bowden, J Jackson, P Jackson, Jones, Maloney MBE, Murphy, Quinn, Sims and Sweeney.**

7 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

8 **MINUTES**

- * **Resolved that the Minutes of the extra-ordinary meeting held on 19 October 2020 be approved and signed.**

9 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

10 **REVIEW OF PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS REGARDING BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS**

A report was submitted which updated Members that some of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (“CSPL”) best practice recommendations related to the Council’s existing agreed Procedure for Dealing with Complaints regarding breach of the Code of Conduct for Members.

At its last meeting held on 19 October 2020, Standards Committee considered a position statement on the Council’s progress so far. The Chief Executive responded to the CSPL in November 2020 with a progress update for the Council which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Standards Committee also agreed at its last meeting for a Working Group from the Committee membership to consider the implications of those recommendations that relate to the Council’s existing agreed Procedure for Dealing with Complaints.

The Working Group met on 16 December 2020 to consider some proposed amendments to the existing Procedure and this report set out the Working Group recommendation for proposed amendments to the existing Procedure for Dealing with Complaints to address the relevant CSPL best practice recommendations.

- * **Resolved that the proposed amendments to the existing Procedure for Dealing with Complaints regarding breach of the Code of Conduct for Members to address the Committee on Standards in Public Life best practice recommendations be approved.**

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

11 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2019/20

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2019/20.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provided an Annual Review Letter to each Council to help inform Members of their respective Council's performance in relation to complaints. A copy of the letter was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Annual Review Letter provided information in relation to the number of complaints received by the LGSCO in the twelve-month period ending 31 March 2020, as well as the decisions reached by the LGSCO in the same period. Members noted that in the period, six complaints were upheld, which, in comparison to 2018/19, was one more.

The significant challenges facing the Council in terms of budget reductions meant that it was harder to continue to meet expectations and could impact on the scope for and level of complaints. The Council continued to treat all complaints seriously and ensures we take on board any learning points and make necessary changes to processes where appropriate.

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

12 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS 2020/21

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of Ombudsman cases from 1 April 2020 to 30 November 2020.

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

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

13 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.

Since January 2020, the Monitoring Officer had received 55 complaints against Members, 3 of which related to parish councillors. 37 of the complaints were submitted by councillors against councillors and 20 from members of the public. Two of the complaints fell into both categories giving a total of 57.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

47 of which had been dealt with under delegated powers, including 6 resolved by way of alternative resolution i.e. informal advice and 41 which the Monitoring Officer decided not to investigate in accordance with the examples listed in Appendix 1 of the Procedure. The remaining eight were being assessed.

- * **Resolved that the verbal update be noted.**

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