

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
10 July 2023

(Present) Councillors Bowden (Chairman), Bond, Johnson and Maloney MBE
(Not Present) Councillors Collier, Hawley, McCormack, Murphy MBE, Pearl
and Stevenson.

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

* **Resolved that Councillor Bowden be appointed Chairman.**

Councillor Bowden here took the Chair.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

3 MINUTES

* **Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023 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 2023/24

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of Ombudsman cases from 1 April 2023 to 31 May 2023.

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.**

6 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

A report was submitted which detailed the training opportunities available to Members and attendance rates from 1 January 2023 to the 16 June 2023, and Member training currently planned for the remainder of 2023/2024.

In accordance with the records held by the Organisational Design and Development Team, nine briefing/training sessions were delivered during the period of 1 January 2023 to 16 June 2023, including 14 induction sessions for new Members. The sessions were attended by a total of 85 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,

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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.

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

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

A report was submitted which presented some proposed amendments to the Council's Procedure for Dealing with Complaints regarding breach of the Code of Conduct for Members.

The Procedure was last reviewed by the Committee on 12 January 2021 when changes were approved to address the Committee on Standards in Public Life best practice recommendations.

The Procedure had recently been reviewed to ensure it remained fit for purpose and was operating effectively.

The proposed changes to the Procedure were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. They included clarification regarding the right to request a review when the Monitoring Officer decided not to investigate the complaint in accordance with the delegation from Council.

The other proposed change related to the non-exhaustive list of examples of complaints which the Monitoring Officer may decide not to progress to investigation set out in Appendix 1 to the Procedure. The change proposed would mean complaints which related to incidents which happened more than 12 months ago and with little benefit in investigating, or the investigation would be compromised by the passage of time, were not progressed to investigation.

* **Resolved that the proposed amendments to the Council's Procedure for Dealing with Complaints regarding breach of the Code of Conduct for Members be approved.**

8 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 2023, the Monitoring Officer had received 15 complaints against Members including Parish Councillors, which had been dealt with under delegated powers. The complaints were submitted from members of the public, Parish Councillors and Elected Members. Out of 15 cases, three 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. Four cases concluded at stage 2 of the Procedure by way of alternative resolution i.e. informal advice. There were eight complaints outstanding which are under consideration.

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