

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
8 July 2024

(Present) Councillors Bell, Bond, Collier, Hawley, Laird, Maloney MBE,
McCormack and Pearl

(Not Present) Councillors Bowden and Stevenson.

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

- * Resolved that Councillor Bowden be appointed Chair of this committee and Councillor Bond be appointed Chair for this meeting.

Councillor Bond here took the Chair.

2 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bowden.

3 MINUTES

- * Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024 be approved and signed.

Councillor McCormack here entered the meeting.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS UPDATE 2024/25

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of Ombudsman cases from 1 April 2024 to 31 May 2024 and drew comparisons for the same period during 2023/24.

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 2024 to 31 May 2024, and Member training currently planned up to 31 December 2024.

In accordance with the records held by the Organisational Design and Development Team, three briefing/training sessions were delivered during the period of 1 January 2024 to 31 May 2024, including two Chief Executive briefings and one Planning Committee training session. Attendance was 49 Members in total and the breakdown was included at Appendix 1 to the report.

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In addition to the briefing events noted in Appendices 1 and 2, members also had access to over 1000 e-resources on the Learning Hub, bitesize learning on the IT Learning Support Hub, and eLearning opportunities on the My Learning and LGA platform.

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

7 REVISED MEMBERS' ICT PROTOCOL AND GUIDANCE ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

A report was submitted which informed the committee of an updated Members' ICT Protocol and Guidance on use of Social Media prior to its submission to Council for approval.

The Members' ICT Protocol was last reviewed and then adopted by full Council on 12 July 2017. A copy of the Protocol was distributed to all elected members and issued to new members as part of their induction.

Effective communication was vital for councillors. Social media played a key role in achieving this, provided it was used in the right way. Guidance on the use of social media for elected members had been updated. Whilst it was recognised that social media could provide opportunities for the Council to engage with citizens, the use of social media also presented the Council and elected members with certain risks and challenges and could potentially result in breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-Opted Members.

A breach of the Code of Conduct may occur if an elected member fails to comply with the Members' ICT Protocol. Depending on the circumstances, an alleged breach of the Council's Code of Conduct may be considered by the Standards Committee.

The Members' ICT Protocol and Guidance document had been reviewed to ensure they remained fit for purpose.

Members discussed the protocol and guidance and suggested that the following be added to the Guidance on use of Social Media at Appendix 2 to the report:
"Members are responsible for the information that is posted and remains on social media pages and any inappropriate posts should be removed."

* **Resolved that the revised Members' ICT Protocol and Guidance on use of Social Media for Elected Members be recommended to Council for approval.**

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 the last meeting on 18 January 2024, the Monitoring Officer had received 18 complaints against Members including a Parish Councillor, which had been dealt with under delegated powers. The complaints were submitted from members of the public and Elected Members. Five complaints were concluded at stage 1 of the Procedure (which also included one from

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the previous reporting period) which the Monitoring Officer decided not to investigate in accordance with the examples listed in Appendix 1 of the Procedure. Five complaints concluded at stage 2 of the Procedure by way of alternative resolution i.e. informal advice, apology etc. There were nine complaints outstanding which are under consideration.

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

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