

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2016

Present

Independent Co-opted Members: N Jackson – in the Chair, G Linnell
Councillors Andrews, Connolly, Cooley, Evans and Lanchbury
Ringway Parish Council: Councillor C O'Donovan

Also Present

Independent Person: A Eastwood

Apologies

Independent Person: S Beswisk

ST/16/05 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2016 as a correct record.

ST/16/06 Standards Committee – Annual Report

The Annual Report of the Committee was presented for approval. The report set out a summary of the key matters that had been within the remit of the Committee in the previous year. As well as setting out the Committee's role, and the responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer, the report looked at the operation of the members' Code of Conduct and the complaints that had been made against councillors in the year. Of the seven complaints described in the report as having been made in the year, six related to postings on social media by councillors. All those complaints had been rejected as the members had not been acting in an official capacity when making the social media postings.

The Committee discussed how best to address the need for members to have training in social media use and in its potential hazards. It was agreed that as well as offering social media training for current members the training should become part of the new-councillor induction training arranged and offered to newly-elected councillors after the local elections. In preparation for that training, the City Solicitor was asked to review the guidance provided to members on the use of social media.

The Committee discussed and agreed that the Annual Report should be presented to the next meeting of the Council and a copy of the report is appended to these minutes.

Decisions

1. To note the report.

2. To note the work done by the Monitoring Officer during the year.
3. To request the City Solicitor to make arrangements for social media training for councillors, including as part of the new-councillors' induction training.
4. That the Annual Report be presented to the next meeting of the Council to provide all members of the Council with assurance on standards issues.

ST/16/07 Members' Update on Ethical Governance

A draft of a new edition of the "Members Update on Ethical Governance" was considered. This digest of news and information was intended to keep all members of the Council aware of key issues in ethical conduct, complaints, case histories, court and tribunal decisions, and other news stories. It was agreed that the update be sent to all members, subject to making one amendment to the draft proposed by the City Solicitor to revise the wording in relation to offences relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests to align it more closely with the statutory provision.

The Committee discussed the Council's current policy on members being required to have up to date Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks. The City Solicitor informed the Committee that the same matter was being examined by the Audit Committee. It was agreed to await the Audit Committee's conclusions on the matter before any further consideration was given to it by the Committee.

Decision

Subject to the amendment above to approve the publication and distribution of the "Members Update on Ethical Governance".

ST/16/08 The Annual Report and Forward Plan of The Committee on Standards in Public Life

The Annual Report and the Forward Plan of the Committee on Standards in Public Life was presented for information.

The report also explained that the Monitoring Officer had commenced a review of the Council's Standard Arrangements as well as procedural lessons learnt from the recent hearing held by the Standards Committee Hearing Panel (Minute ST/16/10 below).

Decision

To note the report.

ST/16/09 Work Programme for the Committee

Proposals for the Committee's work programme for next year were considered and agreed. It was noted that as well as the scheduled meetings shown in the work programme, the Committee was also to meet on 15 December 2016 to consider the "Code of Corporate Governance".

Decisions

1. To agree the proposed work programme.
2. To request that the work programme include the annual cycle of key items of business the Committee will have to deal with throughout each coming year.

ST/16/10 Minutes of the Standards (Hearing) Subcommittee

Decisions

1. To received and note the minutes of the Standards (Hearing) Subcommittee meeting on 22 September 2016.
2. As recommended by the Subcommittee, to agree to review the process and procedure regarding complaints against members and to invite the complainant in the case heard by the Subcommittee to take part in that review.