

(Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the committee scheduled to be held on 13 June 2019.)

Standards Committee

20 March 2019

Present: Councillor M Rankin (Chair)
Councillors, B Burdis, EN Darke, F Lott, Janet Hunter, K Lee,
and CB Pickard

SC14/03/19 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C Johnson and P Mason.

SC15/03/19 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

SC16/03/19 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

SC17/03/19 Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous Standards Committee meeting held on 29 November 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

That the minutes of the Standards Sub-committee meetings held on 7 September 2018, 19 December 2018, 17 January 2019 and 28 February 2019 be noted.

SC18/03/19 Ethical Governance and Standards

Councillor T Mulvenna, Chair of the Council, and Bryn Roberts, Head of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, were in attendance to give their views on ethical governance and standards issues at the Council.

Councillor Mulvenna stated that he had not seen any evidence of issues in relation to ethical governance or standards during meetings of Full Council over the year. Outside of Council meetings he was aware of some minor issues. In particular, he highlighted his experience of attending external events in his role as Chair where roles and responsibilities may not always be clear to external organisers, and where, on occasion, he had experienced some aggressive or threatening behaviour. It was suggested that this may be an area where an additional protocol may be useful.

Bryn Roberts introduced himself to the Committee, having recently taken up the post of Head of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer. He stated that since joining the Council he had been impressed with the general level of conduct by Members, and he had no particular concerns about ethical governance or standards at the Council. He contrasted this with some of the behaviour he had experienced elsewhere. He highlighted that there are plans in the

work programme to review the Code of Conduct over the coming year to ensure it was in line with best practice.

SC19/03/19 Standards Committee Annual Report 2018/19

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report 2018-19 which summarised the work of the Committee over the previous year. It was noted that the report is due to be finalised and submitted to the Annual Council meeting on 16 May 2019.

Members did not suggest any additions or amendments to the draft report.

Resolved: That the Committee authorise the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee, to finalise the report prior to its submission to the Annual Council meeting to be held on 16 May 2019.

SC20/03/19 Ethical Standards in Local Government: Findings of the Committee of Standards in Public Life

The Committee considered the report which informed the Committee of the findings of the Committee on Standards in Public Life set out in its recent report on Ethical Standards in Local Government which was published in January 2019.

The Committee noted that it was a substantial report, but the main recommendations were summarised in the executive summary and listed on pages 51-54 of the agenda papers.

There was some discussion about some of the recommendations and, in particular, recommendation 3, that councillors should be presumed to be acting in an official capacity in their public conduct, including statements on publicly-accessible social media. It was also noted that recommendation 16 recommended that local authorities should be given the power to suspend councillors, without allowances, for up to six months.

It was noted that many of the recommendations were aimed at Government and would require legislative changes. Officers would be considering the report in the context of the Council's current arrangements.

There was some discussion about the recommendation for councillors to attend formal induction training by their political groups. It was noted that this was something that political groups and national political parties should consider.

Dr Green, Independent Person, asked whether the Council currently has the capacity and resources to pursue best practice. It was noted that the Council already has good arrangements in place and any improvements would come out of the forthcoming review of the code of conduct. The Council would also be looking at what the LGA are doing as a result of the report before implementing any major changes.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee, be asked to undertake a review of the report's recommendations to identify where the Authority is already meeting best practice and where there are areas where

the Authority's arrangements could be improved. Where appropriate this review will inform the development of the Committee's work programme for 2019/20.

SC21/03/19 Action Plan/Work Programme

The Committee considered the action plan/work programme for the year up to 31 March 2019.

It was noted that not all items had been complete during the year, in the absence of a Monitoring Officer in post for part of the year. These items will be rolled over into next year.

There was some discussion about standards training and the need to coordinate any decisions on training with work being undertaken by the Member Support Group on this issue.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Signed by: -----

Date: -----

Cllr M Rankin, Chair of the Standards Committee