

(Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the committee scheduled to be held on 20 March 2019.)

Standards Committee

29 November 2018

Present: Councillor K Lee (Chair)
Councillors, B Burdis, EN Darke, Janet Hunter, C Johnson, P
Mason, and CB Pickard

SC07/11/18 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors M Rankin and F Lott. Also Mr G Clark (Independent Person), Dr S Green (Independent Person), and Ms S Gardner (Independent Person).

SC08/11/18 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

SC09/11/18 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

SC10/11/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous Standards Committee meeting held on 19 July 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

SC11/11/18 Standards Committee Action Plan/Work Programme 2018-19

The Committee considered the report which set out the action plan/work programme of the Committee for the year up to 31 March 2019.

It was noted that some Members had expressed an interest in being part of a study group to review the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and it is hoped this review will commence in the near future.

In relation to the proposals to develop an on-going programme of meetings with invited guests, representatives of the Senior Leadership Team would be invited to the next meeting to discuss ethical governance and ethical standards. There are also plans to continue with the invitations to chairs of standards committees from other authorities in the region to future meetings. In addition, the 6 monthly regional meeting of the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standards Committees and Independent Persons would be re-established.

The Committee was provided with an updated version of the Code of Conduct Pocket Book and it was noted that this updated version will be sent to all Members.

SC12/11/18 Consultation – Local Government Ethical Standards

The Committee considered the report which provided an update to Members on the consultation by the Committee on Standards in Public Life as part of the review of local government standards.

The Committee noted that the consultation is now closed and responses are being analysed, with a report due by the end of the year.

The Committee noted that some of the key messages reported from the consultation related to the lack of strong sanctions within the current system; the variations in codes which can be problematic for dual or triple hatted councillors; and the varying quality of codes of conduct. In addition the current system for declaring interests could be tightened up and made clearer for councillors and officers.

There was some discussion about the situation for Members who may also sit on other authorities, such as the Combined Authority or the Fire Authority, and which organisations code of conduct would apply in these circumstances. It was noted that this could depend on the role and whether a councillor is appointed to that role as a representative of North Tyneside Council, in which case the Council’s Code is likely to apply. There was also some discussion about declarations of interests under these circumstances.

Members requested a briefing note to help clarify some of these issues.

Resolved: That the Report be noted;

That members of the Committee be provided with a briefing note on how codes of conduct and declarations of interest apply to Members when they are also Members of, or are appointed to, other authorities or bodies.

SC13/11/18 Recent Standards Case: Ledbury Town Council (2018)

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on a recent standards case considered by the High Court in relation to Ledbury Town Council.

Members noted that the key message from this case is that a local authority must ensure that complaints about a councillor’s conduct are dealt with under the local authority’s standards arrangements and that an authority would be at risk if it tried to discipline councillors outside of the procedures laid down by the Localism Act.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Signed by: -----

Date: -----

Cllr M Rankin, Chair of the Standards Committee