

**Standards Committee**  
**1 DECEMBER 2021**

Present: Councillors: Brian Donnelly (Chairman), Diana van der Klugt (Vice-Chairman), Karen Burgess, Lynn Lambert, Jim Sanson, David Skipp, John Donaldson, Michael Rumble and Philip Baxter

Apologies: Councillors: Stephen Watkins

Absent: Councillors: Alan Britten

SC/15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/16 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/17 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

SC/18 **COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Legal Services Business Manager, Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report following the Local Government Association making amendments to their previously published Model Councillor Code of Conduct which was adopted in April 2021.

Consideration was given to these further minor amendments and a decision made whether a recommendation would go to Full Council for adoption of the code incorporating the amendments.

The suggested amendments related to the 'Definitions' and 'Declaring interests' sections as set out in the appendix to the report. Further minor amendments were suggested and agreed.

Full training of the new Code of Conduct will be provided to Councillors. Members discussed the importance of training and providing a copy to each Councillor. The Committee agreed that the Guidance was an extremely useful document which should also be shared with Parish and Neighbourhood Councils. It was suggested that Members are encouraged to read the Guidance alongside the Code.

The Legal Services Business Manager, Deputy Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that Parish and Neighbourhood Councils would be made aware of the amended code of conduct, which would be available on the Council's website, and the new document would form part of the Councillor Induction process.

It was agreed to make the recommendation to full Council to adopt the Code of Conduct with the minor amendments.

SC/19 **PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS**

The Monitoring Officer briefed the Committee on the revised draft Procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints. Consideration was given to adopting the revised Procedure and recommending this to full Council.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Procedure had been streamlined and simplified and compiling it had involved huge work from those involved.

The current guidance involved four documents which had been condensed into one much shorter document comprising guidance, complaints form and flow charts.

Members discussed advantages and disadvantages of the guidance suggesting that a sub-committee convened to determine formal investigation could take place in public.

It was felt that holding these in public would show transparency; however the new Procedure recommended that an Independent Person attend any formal investigation to ensure impartiality.

Members considered that often complaints involved a number of complex, sensitive issues which would not benefit from being in the public domain. Details and decisions would also be published once a case is concluded.

It was therefore concluded by the Committee that the reference to formal investigations being held in public be removed.

It was agreed that the adoption of the revised procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints, as amended, would be recommended to full Council.

SC/20 **STANDARDS UPDATE**

The Legal Services Business Manager reported that work had been done on producing templates for standardisation of reports and investigation reports.

These templates would stand up to recent case law and ensure that challenges in decision making were limited.

It was advised that the highest number of complaints had been received by the Council during this financial year with only a few cases outstanding. Full details will be reported at the next meeting with number of complaints and associated costs involved.

The Chairman requested that in future as much detail as possible of complaints should be reported publicly.

SC/21 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

*The meeting closed at 11.35 am having commenced at 10.03 am*

**CHAIRMAN**