

MINUTES OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Tuesday, 21 January 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Carol Wooldridge (Chair), Karen Walton (Vice-Chair), Derek Forrest, Renee Blow and David Suthers

INDEPENDENT PERSON: David Haley

OFFICERS: Dave Whelan (Shared Services Lead - Legal & Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Coral Astbury (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

PUBLIC: 0

5 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Carol Chisholm and Ken Jones.

6 Declarations of Interest

None.

7 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 21 March 2019 of the Standards Committee

Members were advised that there had been a clerical error on the agenda and that the minutes to be signed off were from the Standards Committee held on Wednesday 3 July 2019.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the Standards Committee held on Wednesday 3 July 2019 to be agreed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

8 Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 18 June 2019 of Standards Committee Initial Assessment Hearing Panel

Members were advised that the complaint against Councillors A and B was still unresolved. Although an in principle agreement was now in place there was no further progress made.

The Interim Monitoring Officer indicated that formal letters would be sent next week, providing a deadline for the complaint to be resolved and advising that if no progress had been made the complaint would be referred to a hearing of the full Standards Committee.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the Standards Committee Initial Assessment Hearing Panel held on Tuesday 18 June 2019 to be agreed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

9 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 1 August 2019 of Standards Committee Initial Assessment Hearing Panel

Members were advised that the complaint had now been resolved with Councillor A reading a pre-agreed apology at Cabinet.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the Standards Committee Initial Assessment Hearing Panel held on Thursday 1 August 2019, be agreed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

10 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 29 August 2019 of Standards Committee Initial Assessment Hearing Panel

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the Standards Committee Initial Assessment Hearing Panel held on Thursday 29 August be agreed as correct record for signing by the Chair.

11 Standards Annual Report

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Monitoring Officer which provided an account of standards and related work carried out within the last twelve months.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that in 2017/18 the Standards Committee had undertaken a lot of the policy and guidance work, leaving the Committee in a strong position.

On the 21 March 2018 full Council adopted the Member and Officer protocol, with all members signing up to it. Following the all-out election in May 2019, members were asked to sign up again. Currently 47 members had signed the Member Officer Protocol, with the outstanding members being followed up.

Members were advised that for the period 1 November 2018 to 31 December 2019 there had been seven formal complaints about members, with six of the complaints being made by members of the public. Common themes of complaint included; failure to declare an interest, improper use of influence and failure to treat someone with respect. The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that a decision to take no action was made in five cases and an apology/explanatory statement was sought (and obtained) in two cases.

Members were advised that following the appointment to Shared Services posts in November 2019, Chris Moister had been appointed to the role of Monitoring Officer for both South Ribble Borough Council and Chorley Borough Council. The Deputy Monitoring Officer would be meeting with Officers from Chorley to discuss how best to align both Council's Code of Conducts. Members received this positively and suggested that a meeting between the two Council's Standards Committee and Independent Persons would be beneficial when looking to learn from each other's practices.

RESOLVED:

(Unanimously)

1. The sentence within paragraph 18 be amended to read, "During the last twelve months there have been three such Hearing Panels."
2. The report is agreed for submission to Full Council in April 2020 for final approval.
3. That the report be noted.

Chair

Date