

Minutes of Code of Conduct Working Group

Meeting date Thursday, 23 June 2022

Members present: Councillors Carol Wooldridge and Jacqui Mort;
Mr David Haley - Independent Person and
Mr Barry Parsonage – Independent Person

Officers: Chris Moister (Director of Governance), Dave Whelan (Shared Services Lead - Legal & Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Turner.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

4 Code of Conduct Review

The Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer presented a revised Members Code of Conduct for consideration, incorporating the proposed changes and comments made at the last meeting.

Reference was made to inclusion of the distinction between “affects” and “directly relates” on page 14, which the Working Group agreed was very helpful. The Monitoring Officer explained that the guidance would sit alongside the Code, and specific, practical examples discussed during the training for elected members.

The Group noted that the additional text regarding bringing the Council into disrepute on page 5 and agreed it was an integral part of the Code, not all of which was repeated later in the guidance. They expressed the view that the text should be more declaratory i.e. 1st person, as reflected throughout the document as a whole.

With regard to page 7, members agreed to keep the text regarding bad conduct as a helpful reminder.

With regard to page 12 – Gifts and Hospitality members agreed the revised wording was an improvement.

Members queried the proposed value of £50 at paragraph 2.2. The Monitoring Officer suggested leaving this paragraph in, as one of the aims of the Code was to provide consistency and a substantial number of Councils would be adopting this wording. He proposed that the Code could always be reviewed next year, when it would be possible to make a comparison with other local authorities.

This proposal was agreed by the Group and further that the Code be reviewed on an annual basis to address any issues that had arisen during the year.

It was also suggested that specific training on the Code be provided to members of the Planning Committee.

The Group also felt that Code of Conduct training for all elected members was a good opportunity to emphasize the availability of Independent Persons if a member wished to approach them about any matter.

On page 17, reference was made to the slight differences in the wording in the table of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests between the Revised Code and the SR Guidance document. It was agreed that the Code and supporting Guidance be amended to sit with each other.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the revised Code of Conduct and supporting Guidance be amended as agreed;
- ii) That the Standards Complaints and Investigation Procedure be updated in accordance with the revised Code;
- iii) That the revised Code of Conduct, supporting Guidance and the updated Standards Complaints and Investigation Procedure be presented to a future meeting of Council;
- iv) That the Code of Conduct be reviewed annually; and
- v) That the views of the Working Group as regards training be adopted.

Chair

Date