

Report of the Standards Committee

1. Any recommendations on the reports that require a decision by full Council appear as separate items on the agenda.
2. Please note that the report may not necessarily reflect the wording used in the minutes.

Meeting held on 21 December 2023

Standards Update

3. The Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer, Chris Moister, presented a report providing an update on the Standards Regime for the year 2023.
4. The report updated members on the complaints received against councillors and how they had been progressed. It enabled members to consider any areas of concern over behaviours and focus any work planning.
5. The Standards Committee had undertaken a significant amount of work in the last few years to support members in improving standards of behaviour. These issues were acknowledged by councillors and referenced by External Audit as an area for improvement which will enable the council to best meet its objectives and support clear and robust decision making.
6. A lengthy review of Code of Conduct had been completed and training provided to all members. The Chair and Vice Chair have supported the Monitoring Officer in embedding the new code and the Committee as a group have led on the improvements.
7. One of the areas of complaint, which was not viewed as a breach of the Code and not proceeded with, related to the use of Social Media. This was identified as an improvement area and there was a report on the agenda to recommend a review of the Social Media Protocol.
8. The Committee noted the report.

Social Media Protocol

9. Following a review of the Code of Conduct, the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer, Chris Moister, presented a report requesting that members consider the Social Media Protocol which provides guidance on the application of the Code.

9. . The existing protocol was a short, easy to read document providing a useful guide for members. In particular it set out some of the greater risk legal areas and a helpful list of do's and don'ts. Whilst the advice contained in the Protocol was still largely applicable it had not kept up with some changes to the Code of Conduct or changes in technology.
10. .A review of the document was proposed to ensure it is still fit for purpose.
11. The Committee resolved:
 1. That a working group be set up to review the Social Media Protocol, open to all members of the Standards Committee (including independent persons).
 2. That a meeting of the working group be convened in due course.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the report of the Standards Committee.

Councillor Kath Unsworth
Chair of the Standards Committee