

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2022**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena,
Rugby Road, West Bridgford
and live streamed on the Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors R Walker (Chairman), K Beardsall, B Gray, R Mallender, D Mason,
A Phillips and K White

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

S Sull

Monitoring Officer

H Tambini

Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

J Baggaley

12 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 October 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 4 October 2021, were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

14 Cases and Work Update 2021-2022

The Monitoring Officer presented a report updating the Committee on the complaints received since the last meeting of the Standards Committee in October 2021. It was noted that two Code of Conduct complaints had been received, neither of which had been accepted under the Code.

In respect of other work, the Monitoring Officer advised that she continued to support the work of the Member Development Group in relation to the Member Training Programme and had also supported the Working Group in the development of the Code of Conduct, the guidance, the arrangements, revisions to the Register of Interest form and guidance.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

15 Code of Conduct

The Monitoring Officer presented a report updating the Committee on the work of the working group in relation to the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer referred to the discussion and decision taken by the

Committee at the previous meeting in October 2021, including the establishment of a working group, details of which were highlighted in the report, and advised that the working group had met on four occasions.

The Committee noted that the working group had undertaken a significant workload, covering a range of issues, details of which were highlighted at 4.1 in the report. Following consideration of those issues, the working group resolved to use the LGA Code as a template and the starting point for the review of the Council's Code of Conduct. The Council's Code attached at Appendix A had therefore been revised, and the Committee was asked to refer the revised Code to the Governance Scrutiny Group for consideration and then on to Council, for adoption.

The Monitoring Officer advised that to underpin the Code of Conduct, supporting guidance would be made available in the form issued by the LGA and was attached at Appendix B. The aspiration was that the sections of guidance be hyperlinked to the code, this was being worked on and it was hoped that it would be finalised before submission of the Code of Conduct to Council.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the working group then went on to look at the procedure for dealing with complaints, the arrangements and having considered those arrangements the group had recommended some amendments, which were attached at Appendix C. The Committee also noted that the working group had recommended that the LGA guidance on complaint handling should be published alongside the arrangements to support customer understanding of the process, and that document was attached at Appendix D.

The working group had then gone on to consider the Councillor Register of Interest form, and had proposed amendments to the form, details of which were highlighted in Appendix E, together with some guidance notes, attached at Appendix F. The Committee was advised that currently the numbering in the guidance document did not match the numbering of the form and that would be addressed prior to presenting the report to Council. The group had considered looking at the complaint form, and those considerations would be submitted to a future Standards Committee meeting.

In conclusion, the Monitoring Officer advised that training issues would arise, as a result of revisions to the Code of Conduct, and that would be developed through the Member Development Group.

The Chairman referred to the six documents that the Committee was recommended to submit to the Governance Scrutiny Group. He went on to advise that there appeared to be a slight discrepancy between the Register of Interest form and the guidance, in the phrasing of the question relating to the membership of other groups and political parties. He considered that whilst the guidance was clear, the question in the form was not and suggested that it should be amended to make it clear in what capacity a person was a member of a particular group.

Ms White – Independent Member suggested that going forward it would be useful to set up a teams or SharePoint Register of Interest form, to enable

easier use and analysis.

The Monitoring Officer advised that there were aspirations to improve the Council's website generally and stated that Ms White's comments would be taken on board going forward.

Councillor Beardsall asked for some clarification in relation to disclosure of gifts and hospitality as there appeared to be a discrepancy between the figure of £25 referred to on the Register of Interest form and £50 referred to in the guidance.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the figure was £50 and would be amended in the guidance to reflect that.

Councillor Mason thanked members of the working group, all officers involved and, in particular the Monitoring Officer and Chairman for their hard work and reflected on the significant work undertaken to bring the documents before the Committee.

Mr Richards – Independent Member echoed the comments made, and as a new member of the Standards Committee advised that this process had been an excellent induction to the work of the Committee. He also wished to thank Mr Baggaley for his support.

Councillor R Mallender reiterated the thanks given and confirmed that as the Chairman of the Member Development Group, any additional training would be included in future training programmes.

The Chairman repeated the thanks given and referred to the considerable work undertaken by the working group, which had thoroughly discussed all of the issues and produced clear recommendations.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the amendments, made by the group, to the LGA Model Code of Conduct be noted; and
- b) the revised Rushcliffe Code of Conduct be referred to the Governance Scrutiny Group for comment and, thereafter, to Council for adoption.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm.

CHAIRMAN