

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2022**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West
Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors R Walker (Chairman), A Phillips, R Butler, R Mallender

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

K White (Independent Member)
C Richards (Independent Person)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

G Dennis Monitoring Officer
E Richardson Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors K Beardsall, S Mallender and D Mason

16 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17 Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 February 2022

The Chairman noted that Mr Richards – Independent Person had attended the meeting in February but was not recorded as being in attendance. Mr Richards added that he was an Independent Person rather than an Independent Member as referred to in the minutes.

Subject to the above changes, the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2022 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Mr Baggaley as previous Independent Person on this Committee for his commitment to high standards in public life and for his guidance and knowledge about standards in the Borough. The Chairman said that Mr Baggaley's steadfastness had been helpful to the Committee in navigating a recent challenging period, as had been his support for the Council's update to the Code of Conduct. The Chairman thanked Mr Baggaley for his excellent service to the Council and to its residents.

18 **Cases and Work Update - 2022-23**

The Monitoring Officer presented a report which updated the Committee on complaints received since the last Committee. She explained that the report outlined areas where training or education had been identified which would assist Councillors' understanding of the Standards regime requirements, including any actions proposed to meet those training needs.

The Monitoring Officer noted that four complaints had been received since the last Committee Meeting and confirmed that all had been discussed with the Independent Persons, as required.

The Monitoring Officer explained that since publishing of the report, the complaint against a member of Holme Pierrepont and Gamston Parish Council had been resolved informally. She noted that two of the complaints had not been accepted under the code and that fact finding was currently taking place for the fourth complaint.

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee about work being carried out by Bingham Town Council, following acceptance by the Town Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council of the recommendations of the Improvement Board earlier in the year. The Monitoring Officer said that an update would be presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 13 December 2022.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that Code of Conduct Training had been organised for all Rushcliffe Borough Councillors and that it would subsequently be rolled out to Town and Parish Councillors.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee received and noted the report.

19 **Review of Councillor Complaint Form**

The Monitoring Officer presented a report updating the Committee about the review of the Councillor Complaint Form, guidance and the process for lodging a complaint.

The Monitoring Officer explained that a number of changes to the form were proposed, as outlined in the report.

In relation to the Complaint Form, Ms White – Independent Person asked whether the form complied with online accessibility tools, to ensure that it was clear and understandable and that there was facility to download it. The Chairman agreed that the ability to share and complete the form offline and then submit it via email or post would be helpful.

In relation to the Complaint Form Guidance, Ms White – Independent Person referred to the use of the word vexatious and questioned whether the public would understand its meaning. The Monitoring Officer explained that the policy was available on the Council's website and was called the Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints Policy, and that it explained what behaviour would be deemed as being vexatious.

In relation to the process for submitting a complaint, the Monitoring Officer noted that previous feedback about accessibility and having the option to download it would also be relevant for the process.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Standards Committee:

- a) considered and discussed the proposed changes suggested by officers at paragraph 4.1 and any additional ideas committee members may put forward; and
- b) gave officers a clear mandate to move forward with the revisions to the Councillor Complaint form and guidance and the process for making a complaint.

The meeting closed at 7:14pm.

CHAIRMAN