

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

20 July 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Huntley (Chair), May (Vice-Chair), Ayling, Kelly, Purser, Turner, Woodman, Blanchard-Cooper (Substitute for Worne) and Dr Walsh (Substitute for Batley)

Also present were Independent Persons Mr John Cooke, Mr John Thompson and Mrs Sandra Prail.

167. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Batley, Worne and Lloyd.

168. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

169. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2023 were approved by the Committee. These would be signed at the end of the meeting.

170. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA WHICH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

There were no urgent matters for this meeting.

171. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been submitted for this meeting.

172. START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings for 2023/24 be 6.00pm.

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173. MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Monitoring Officer introduced the report, explaining that this was a regular report to Committee. He updated that all Councillors had now signed the Code of Conduct, as the remaining Councillor to do so had signed since the agenda had been published. He also updated that he had been to Littlehampton Town Council to provide training on the Code of Conduct, and would continue to offer this to other town and parish councils. John Thompson's term as Independent Person had been extended at Full Council the previous evening, to July 2024, to fall alongside Sandra Prail and John Cooke's end of terms.

An updated training matrix had been handed out to Members at the meeting, to reflect that all Members of the Audit & Governance Committee had attended the compulsory training on 18 July 2023, and were therefore trained to sit on the Audit & Governance Committee. There were two Members of the Licensing Committee yet to undertake the compulsory Licensing training.

Members were then invited to raise questions and it was asked whether a copy of the training matrix could be uploaded to the Members' area on SharePoint for ease of access. The Monitoring Officer would arrange for this to be uploaded.

The Committee noted the report.

174. MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Monitoring Officer introduced the report, explaining that this was a regular report to Committee. The Member Induction Programme had been attached to the agenda for reference. Member feedback regarding the Member Induction had so far been very positive, and it had been great to see Members in the Chamber for the in-person training, which had achieved high attendance. There would be a questionnaire going out to Members for their feedback on the Programme. The Monitoring Officer felt it was important that Member learning and development was continued over the coming years, and there had been suggestions to him from some Members that the Member Officer relations training should be carried out on a more regular basis, possibly making this a mandatory session. The Monitoring Officer thanked the Members for their engagement with the Member Induction Programme.

Members then took part in a question and answer session where the following points were raised:

- One Member stated he had been through many inductions during his long-serving role as a Councillor, and felt this Programme was excellent, and a great improvement on previous years.
- Support was offered for regular Member development sessions on selected topics throughout the year, however it was not felt these should be mandatory.

- Thanks was given to the Committee Services Team, whose welcoming attitude to new Members was appreciated.
- In future, it was thought that information should be provided to prospective candidates in advance of elections, on what their roles as Councillors may entail, and the calendar commitments regarding training. The Monitoring Officer explained that the Member Induction Programme had been sent to all agents in advance of the elections for them to send to prospective candidates, and he would make sure this was also done for the next elections.
- For the next Member Induction Programme, could a one page table showing all the training dates be provided? The pack was useful, but the training dates were spread across multiple pages, and it was felt an additional table would be beneficial. The Monitoring Officer felt this would be a useful addition.
- Members felt the in-person training had been very positive and was a preferable option to virtual training.
- Questionnaires for Members to feedback would be welcomed, and Members were encouraged to complete this.
- For future induction programmes, could the training schedule be shared with Parish and Town Councils as soon as possible to avoid diary conflicts? The Monitoring Officer felt this was a good idea.
- It was asked that PowerPoint training slides be sent to Members in advance of the sessions, and that PowerPoint notes sheets be printed off and handed out to Members, so they could annotate these during the sessions.
- Further thanks was given to Officers for organising and facilitating the Member Induction Programme.

The Committee noted the report and the current progress of the Member Induction Programme and Member learning and development more generally.

175. REGISTER OF ASSESSMENTS OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Monitoring Officer introduced the report, explaining that this was a regular report to Committee. Since he had been at Arun, no cases had needed to go to a Standards Hearing Panel, and although some had needed investigation, the majority had been concluded at informal stage. The table at 4.2 showed the complaints that had been received, the oldest of which would drop of the table for the next meeting. He updated that 22/16 had now concluded and he had found there to be no breach of the Code. The Subject Member and Complainant had both been informed.

The table on page 31 had been designed to give statistical information, showing any patterns or trends, and a breakdown of where the complaints had come from.

Members were then invited to raise questions. It was asked when complaint 22/16 had been made and whether the 22 in the reference number meant this was from 2022. There was concern this had taken too long for an initial assessment, particularly as a member of the public had been involved. The Monitoring Officer explained that the

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22 in the reference meant the complaint had been made in the 2022/23 municipal year, and that particular complaint had been made in February 2023. He acknowledged that it had taken longer than it should have to complete the initial assessment and he had already apologised to both the Subject Member and Complainant about this. He was focused on speeding up this process for future complaints.

Having passed their observations to the Monitoring Officer, the Committee noted the report.

176. WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer presented the Work Programme to the Committee. He explained there would be more unique items added to the Work Programme alongside the three regular reports. He wanted to add an item regarding the recruitment of Independent Persons to the Work Programme for the meeting in October, which was supported by Members of the Committee.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 6.39 pm)