

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

1 July 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Tilbrook (Chair), P. English (Vice-Chair), Bicknell, Caffyn, Daniells, J. English, Gregory, Haywood and Kelly

Councillors Edwards and Pendleton were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Also present were Independent Persons Mr J Thompson, Mrs S Prail and Mr J Cooke.

95. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to this virtual meeting of the Standards Committee.

The Chair confirmed that this meeting was being held in accordance with the resolution made at the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 12 May 2021 (Minute 551) which continued Section 5 Part 5 of the Constitution (The Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules) and declared the use of Council powers, under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, and the general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, for making advisory decisions, as appropriate.

96. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Bennett.

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

The Monitoring Officer explained that some Non-Committee Members had asked to join the meeting and see the exempt papers. The Constitution allowed non-Committee Members to attend the Committee meetings, and it was at the discretion of the Chair whether or not they be allowed to speak. If non-Committee Members attended meetings they must declare any interest they had in items discussed, in particular if they had made a complaint or been complained about. Non-Committee Members had been advised the decision to allow access to the exempt papers would be made by the Committee and depended on that Member demonstrating they had a 'Need to Know'. Being a complainant or the subject of a complaint, did not count as a 'Need to Know'.

Standards - 1.07.21

98. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2021 were approved by the Committee with the agreement for them to be signed as soon as practicably possible.

99. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that there were no questions submitted for this meeting.

100. START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings for 2021/22 be 6.00 pm.

101. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair invited the Interim Monitoring Officer to present his report, who then provided an introduction to the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee. He drew Members' attention to items 1, the general Terms of Reference of the Committee, and 2, the recommendation for Committee to ask the Constitution Working Party (CWP) to recommend to Full Council that the Terms of Reference of Standards Committee explicitly include the coordination of Member Learning and Development. The Monitoring Officer went on to explain that in several other Committees each Member was required to carry out training before they could sit on the Committee, and that this was not currently coordinated by any one Committee.

Members then took part in a full debate where the following points were raised:

- Some companies used an online training matrix that is visible to all, could this be considered for Arun.
- Could the list of training that Members had completed, and their entitlement to sit on each Committee be published, which would make finding a suitable substitute easier. The Committee Services Manager provided reassurance that Committee Services kept a list of who was eligible to sit on each Committee and provided this for the purposes of finding substitutes when required.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Tilbrook and seconded by Councillor Bicknell.

The Committee

RESOLVED - that

1. the general Terms of Reference for Committees in Part 3 paragraph 3 of the Constitution be noted, and the specific Terms of Reference of this Committee as established by Full Council on 19 May 2021 as set out in part 1 and Part 2 of Appendix 1 be further noted.
2. the Constitution Working Party (CWP) be asked to recommend to Full Council that the terms of reference of Standards Committee explicitly include the coordination of Member Learning and Development.
3. the schedule of Committee meetings for 2021/22 set out in the Calendar of Meetings attached be noted.

102. MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

The Chair invited the Interim Monitoring Officer to present his report. He explained the report was the first of its kind in Arun, and the purpose was to give Members an overview of the work of the Monitoring Officer. The report went through the Terms of Reference of the Committee so Members could see how it had evolved. The Monitoring Officer went on to talk about promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct, and explained the report made clear the promotion of high standards sat not just with the Code of Conduct, but also through the adoption of protocols. The report also pointed out that Arun was seeking to train Parish Councils on the new Code of Conduct, although not all had so far chosen to adopt the new code.

The Monitoring Officer drew Members' attention to page 21 where it mentioned Member/Officer Protocol. It was important that the Member/Officer Protocol be re-examined because it had not been looked at for some time and also the change to the Committee Structure implied a new way of working with Officers. The Monitoring Officer also highlighted that he had been asked to look at how Members conducted themselves during online meetings, as there had been complaints about Members eating, drinking, smoking or being in a café/restaurant. He noted Members may wish for this to be looked at in the Work Programme. The Monitoring Officer also mentioned that The Local Government Association (LGA), whose code Arun had partly adopted, were in the process of writing guidance on the code, which would be drawn to Members' attention as and when it became available.

The Chair thanked the Monitoring Officer for the report.

Standards - 1.07.21

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Monitoring Officer Report be noted.

103. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair invited the Interim Monitoring Officer to present the Work Programme. He explained that Member Learning and Development may be added to it if responsibility for this was given to Standards Committee.

The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Tilbrook and seconded by Councillor Gregory.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its Work Programme for 2021/22 be noted.

104. REGISTER OF ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS

The Chair invited the Interim Monitoring Officer to present his report. He explained that this was a record made available to the public, to show what activity had taken place in terms of complaints about Councillors.

A discussion took place around the Complaint Form, and whether or not there was a section on the form that highlighted if the Member had been carrying out their duties as a Councillor when the complaint was made. The Monitoring Officer said he would review this.

Clarification was sought around anonymous complaints and whether these were allowed. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that these were not usually allowed, unless there was an obvious good reason for this or that the incident had happened in a public place in which other people could verify it.

It was asked whether anything sent to Members in relation to the Standards Committee, be also sent to the Independent Persons.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Register of Complaints against Councillors and progress of any outstanding complaints be noted.

105. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the items.

106. REGISTER OF ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS
[EXEMPT - PARAGRAPH 1 - INFORMATION RELATING TO ANY INDIVIDUAL]

Councillor P. English declared a prejudicial interest and was placed in the waiting room.

The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Tilbrook and seconded by Councillor Gregory.

Following a discussion, the Committee

RESOLVED

That the Register of Complaints against Councillors be noted.

(The meeting concluded at 7.37 pm)