



# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **MONDAY 15 OCTOBER 2018 AT 7.30 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manjeet Gill', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Manjeet Gill  
Interim Chief Executive  
Published on 7 October 2018

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# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Our Vision**

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

## **Our Priorities**

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

## **The Underpinning Principles**

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### Councillors

Ken Miall (Chairman)

Richard Dolinski (Vice-Chairman)

Parry Batth

UllaKarin Clark

Dianne King

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

### Parish/Town Council Representatives

Sally Gurney

Co-Optee, Wokingham Town Council

Roy Mantel

Co-Optee Twyford Parish Council

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
10.		<b>APOLOGIES</b> To receive any apologies for absence	
11.		<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 July 2018.	5 - 6
12.		<b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest.	
13.		<b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any public questions.  A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.  The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of this Committee.  Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to <a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions">www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</a>	
14.		<b>MEMBER QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any Member questions.	
15.		<b>PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any questions from Parish/Town Councillors.	
16.	All Wards	<b>UPDATES ON COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK</b> To consider an update on Code of Conduct complaints.	7 - 12

**Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent.**

A Supplementary Agenda will be issued by the Chief Executive if there are any other items to consider under this heading.

**CONTACT OFFICER**

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Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 4 JULY 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.20 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Richard Dolinski (Vice-Chairman), Parry Batth, UllaKarin Clark, Dianne King and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Parish/Town Council Representatives:- Sally Gurney (Co-Optee, Wokingham Town Council)

**Officers Present**

Andrew Moulton, Monitoring Officer

Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist

**3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Ken Miall.

Richard Dolinski chaired the meeting.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee, held on 8 March and 13 June 2018, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

**7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

**8. PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME**

There were no Parish or Town Council questions.

**9. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 9 to 14, which provided an update on Code of Conduct complaints. The report stated that, since the previous report to the Committee, in January 2018, one new complaint had been received.

The new complaint related to the alleged conduct of a Member prior to a public meeting in March 2018. Following an initial meeting between the Monitoring Officer, Chairman of the Standards Committee and an Independent Person, an independent investigation had been conducted. The investigation had found no evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct. Consequently, no further action was taken.

The Committee discussed any broader training/learning issues arising out of the report.

Imogen Shepherd-Dubey suggested that, in cases where no further action was taken, the complainant should receive a more detailed reply setting out the reasons why the alleged behaviour was not found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct. Following discussion, the

Committee agreed that the provision of greater detail on the reasons for a particular decision would help to make the process more transparent and robust.

In relation to the discussion at the previous meeting on the consultation exercise being carried out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Monitoring Officer provided an update. The Committee on Standards in Public Life had carried out two roundtable events in April 2018. These events had highlighted a number of issues, including:

- The high level of variation in local authority Codes of Conduct;
- Consistency in the declaration of interests;
- Treatment of gifts and hospitality;
- Lack of stronger sanctions which undermined public confidence;
- Effectiveness of the Independent Person role;
- Increasing pressures on the Monitoring Officer;
- The importance of “culture” and the role of the Government in driving improvement.

It was expected that the Committee on Standards in Public Life would publish a report on Ethical Standards in Local Government later in 2018.

Members also considered the provision of a training session on Code of Conduct issues prior to the next meeting on 15 October 2018. This was considered to be useful as there were a number of new/inexperienced Members on the Committee.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the update report on complaints and feedback be noted;
- 2) in relation to Code of Conduct cases where no further action was taken after the initial review, the Monitoring Officer provide more detailed feedback to complainants and other interested parties on the rationale for the decision;
- 3) the update on the review of Ethical Standards in Local Government, being carried out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, be noted;
- 4) a Code of Conduct training session be held at 7pm on 15 October, with the Standards Committee meeting to start at 7.30pm.

# Agenda Item 16.

**TITLE** Updates on complaints and feedback

**FOR CONSIDERATION BY** Standards Committee on 15 October 2018

**WARD** (All Wards);

**DIRECTOR** Director of Corporate Services - Graham Ebers

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

To inform and feedback results of the Member Complaints process.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

To note the report and consider any issues arising.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

Since the last report on Complaints to the Committee on 4 July 2018 there have been five new complaints received.

Appendix A provides a summary of the complaints.

A verbal update will be given at the meeting on any specific patterns/trends or other matters that the Committee may need to consider.

Also, the Committee is asked to consider any broader training issues that arise from these and previous complaints.



## Background

Under Section 9.1.13.5 of the Council's Constitution, the Monitoring Officer provides a report to the Standards Committee, on a quarterly basis, which contains the following: the number and nature of complaints received; progress on any investigations and associated costs; and identify areas where training or other action might avoid further complaints. However, the name(s) of the Member(s) will not be disclosed.

Since the last report to the Committee on 4 July 2018, there have been five new Code of Conduct complaints received.

Under the Council's adopted policy for the consideration of Code of Conduct Complaints, the Monitoring has delegated authority to decide whether the complaint:

- can be resolved informally i.e. by mediation with the two parties before making a decision on whether the complaint merits formal investigation;
- requires investigation;
- should be referred to the Standards Committee;
- no further action should be taken.

## Analysis of Issues

The latest status of the complaints is shown at Appendix A.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)			
Next Financial Year (Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

**Cross-Council Implications** (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>

<b>List of Background Papers</b>

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## Appendix A - Code of Conduct Complaints – Outcome of Complaints

### New complaints since 4 July 2018

<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>Summary of Complaint</b>	<b>Progress/Conclusion</b>	<b>Date Concluded</b>
12/8/18	WBC	Relates to conduct and behavior at a public meeting and actions surrounding support for a resident.	Allegations are subject to investigation.	Ongoing
12/8/18	WBC	Relates to conduct and behavior at a public meeting.	Allegations are subject to investigation.	Ongoing
22/8/18	WTC	Relates to a posting on social media.	Further information sought from complainant following meeting with Chairman of Standards Committee and Independent Person.	Ongoing
23/8/18	WTC	Relates to above complaint alleging that complaint is malicious.	See above	Ongoing
31/8/18	WBC	Relates to a planning matter.	Preliminary assessment underway to assess what action necessary.	Ongoing

Key:

WBC = Wokingham Borough Council

WTC = Wokingham Town Council

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