

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.25 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman), Prue Bray, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey and Wayne Smith

Parish/Town Council Representatives: Sally Gurney (Wokingham Town Council)

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services
Jennifer Lee, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Andrew Moulton, Monitoring Officer

28. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Gary Cowan, Graham Howe and Roy Mantel (Twyford Parish Council).

29. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

30. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

32. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

33. PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME

There were no Town or Parish Council questions.

34. CONSULTATION ON WBC CODE OF CONDUCT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 7 to 28, which gave details of a public consultation document on the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors.

The report stated that the Committee had agreed to carry out a consultation exercise relating to the overall provisions of the Code of Conduct and specific changes agreed in principle by Members.

Appended to the report was the draft consultation document and a copy of the Local Government Association's (LGA) Model Member Code of Conduct. It was considered that the Council's Code of Conduct was consistent with the provisions in the LGA model code.

It was proposed to run the consultation exercise up to 11 December 2020. Any feedback would then be considered by the Committee at its meeting in January 2021. Specific feedback would be sought from Town and Parish Councils as they shared the WBC Code of Conduct.

Following approval by the Committee, in January 2021, the amended Code of Conduct would be submitted to the Constitution Review Working Group prior to approval by the full Council.

Sally Gurney suggested that the consultation document should include reference to the seven “Nolan” principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Code of Conduct consultation document be confirmed, subject to inclusion of the seven Nolan principles of public life;
- 2) the Committee receive a further report, at its meeting in January 2021, on the results of the public consultation;
- 3) following agreement on the final changes to the Code of Conduct, a report be submitted to the Constitution Review Working Group prior to approval by the full Council;
- 4) the LGA Model Member Code of Conduct be noted.

35. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 29 to 34, which gave details of progress relating to Code of Conduct complaints investigated since the previous meeting.

The report stated that, since the 1 July 2020 meeting, three new complaints had been received. A summary of the complaints was appended to the report together with progress in resolving earlier, ongoing complaints.

Andrew Moulton (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that two additional complaints had been received, details of which would be included in the report to the next meeting of the Committee.

In the ongoing discussion, Members raised the following points:

Members reiterated earlier concerns about the timeframe for investigation and reporting the outcome of Code of Conduct complaints.

It was noted that a number of complaints related to a perceived lack of social distancing by Members attending public events. Members felt that the Standards Committee was not the appropriate body to deal with alleged breaches of the social distancing guidelines.

It was suggested that the Monitoring Officer write to all Members to remind them of the importance of social distancing at public events and to advise them on appropriate steps to take in the event that constituents accidentally breached the distancing guidelines whilst discussing local issues or seeking advice.

RESOLVED: That the update report on Code of Conduct complaints be noted.