

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee was held on 2 July 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors Rathmell, (Chair), Saunders, (Vice Chair), Coupe, Dean, McTigue, Rostron, M Storey and Waters

OFFICERS: J Etherington, S Lightwing, J Robinson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillor Goodchild.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

19/1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR PRO TEM

As the previous Chair of the Standards Committee, Councillor Rostron took the Chair *Pro Tem*.

Councillor Rostron advised all present that all Members needed to complete the required training prior to sitting at Standards Committee Hearings. There were no Hearings on today's agenda.

NOTED**19/2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Standards Committee. Councillor Rathmell was nominated, seconded and appointed as Chair of the Standards Committee.

ORDERED that Councillor Rathmell was appointed as Chair of the Standards Committee.

19/3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Vice Chair of the Standards Committee. Councillor Saunders was nominated, seconded and appointed as Vice Chair of the Standards Committee.

ORDERED that Councillor Saunders was appointed as Vice Chair of the Standards Committee.

19/4 MINUTES - STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 11 OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 11 October 2018 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

19/5 GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

A report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support was presented, the purpose of which was to provide details of the Register of Gifts and Hospitality for Officers and Members.

The Monitoring Officer was required to review the Register of Gifts and Hospitality for Officers and Members on an annual basis and report details of the entries to the Standards Committee.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

19/6 REMOVAL OF SANCTIONS - VERBAL REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reminded Members that at a meeting of the Standards (Hearings) Sub Committee held on 19 March 2018, Councillor Rathmell was found to have breached the Code of Conduct. Certain sanctions, including a Communication Plan, were imposed on Councillor Rathmell.

At the last meeting of the Standards Committee on 11 October 2018, evidence was provided that the sanctions were not achieving their aims and the Committee agreed to relax those sanctions. The Standards Committee also delegated the ability to make further amendments or remove the Communications Plan, to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Head of Paid Service.

Following the Local Elections in May 2019, the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Head of Paid Service, had taken the decision to remove the Communications Plan, in the best interests of the Council and Councillor Rathmell. The former Chair of the Standards Committee was also consulted prior to the Elections and was in agreement with the proposal.

The Chair referred to recommendations in the Independent Investigating Officer's report in relation to Officer conduct and asked whether any action had been taken. The Deputy Monitoring Officer informed members that he was not aware of the content of the report and was therefore unable to provide a response. The Deputy Monitoring Officer suggested that the Monitoring Officer should be contacted.

The Chair stated that, under the new administration, the Standards Committee would operate a fairer process and would not be used as a tool to silence people. A Member responded that the investigation regarding Councillor Rathmell was carried out by an independent investigator and recommendations had also been made in the Council's audit process.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

19/7

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED

The Chair suggested all Elected Members should be invited to the training for Standards Committee Members.

NOTED