

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee was held on Monday 22 January 2024.

PRESENT: Councillors J Kabuye, (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D McCabe, M Storey, J Thompson and G Wilson

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Davison, S Dean and M Smiles

23/20 **WELCOME AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Building Evacuation procedure.

23/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

23/22 **MINUTES - STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 16 OCTOBER 2023**

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 16 October 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

23/23 **QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT TO COMMITTEE**

The Director of Legal and Governance Services presented the quarterly update report regarding the recent and current position concerning Code of Conduct Complaints to provide the Standards Committee with assurance about the practice and process.

There were no outstanding complaints from 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Fifty-nine complaints had been submitted to date in 2023. Of the 59 complaints, 28 had been rejected on the basis of the assessment criteria, 1 had been withdrawn, 8 discontinued, 6 resolved by way of advice and guidance and 6 were being investigated. There were 10 outstanding complaints for 2023.

Two new Independent Persons had been appointed by Council and they had completed their training and were now active.

The Council's new Constitution came into effect on 18 September 2023. As a result of which the Committee's attention was drawn to the Members Code of Conduct contained therein, which set out the expected standards of behaviour of members. The Code of Conduct Complaint form had been amended to reflect the Code of Conduct contained within the Constitution.

The Monitoring Officer proposed to analyse the available data on complaints in relation to the types of complaints submitted and any themes or trends that had emerged. It was acknowledged that whilst there had not been a huge amount of complaints submitted, it would still be worthwhile reviewing the data to see if there were any recurring issues.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

23/24 **REVIEW OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

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, to ensure that Members and Officers complied with the Members' Code of Conduct and the Officers' Code of Conduct, respectively.

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The Council's Code of Conduct required Councillors and Co-opted Members to declare and register the receipt of either gifts or hospitality with a value of £25 or more.

Declarations were entered in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. Details of entries received from Members for the period January 2022 – December 2022 were attached at Appendix A and for the period January 2023 – December 2023 Appendix B to the submitted report. Details of entries received from Officers for the period January 2022 – December 2022 are attached at Appendix C and for the period January 2023 – December 2023 Appendix D to the submitted.

It was explained that the Council was a key player in the town and hospitality events were an opportunity for Officers to network with other organisations. The Monitoring Officer had to approve all requests for accepting gifts and hospitality, with the Deputy Monitoring Officer approving any such request made by the Monitoring Officer.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

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

None.