

**STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
**13th September, 2018**

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Clark, Fenwick-Green, and Simpson, along with Parish Council Representatives Messrs. D. Bates, D. Rowley and R. Swann and also Mr. P. Edler and Mrs. J. Porter, Independent Co-optees.

Also in attendance was Mr. P. Beavers, Independent Person.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brookes, Ireland and Vjestica and Mr. D. Roper-Newman, Independent Person.

**11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

**12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved:-** That under Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the appendices for Minute Nos. 15 and 16 and Minute No. 17 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14TH JUNE, 2018**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2018.

Reference was made to Minute No. 3 (Minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2018) in terms of the appointment of the Town and Parish Council representatives and the agreement that their membership continued until the 2020 elections. Whilst this had been agreed in principle it was suggested that this be confirmed in writing in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility.

It was also suggested that clarification be sought on the nomination/voting mechanism to be used for the appointment of the Town and Parish Council representatives in the future.

With regards to Minute No. 3 and the response to the consultation (Review into Ethical Standards in Local Government) this had been circulated to all members of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

It was also noted that with regards to Minute No. 4 (Training Plan) liaison was taking place with the Yorkshire Local Councils Association via the Parish Liaison Officer to ascertain their training programme for the year to

avoid any duplication. The Committee emphasised the need for training on social media and urged officers to take this forward.

In terms of the Review of the Whistleblowing Policy (Minute No. 9) the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that any additional information that could be incorporated for the Committee's consideration would be included and updated accordingly for the next meeting.

**Resolved:-** That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

**14. THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND MODERN SLAVERY**

Consideration was given to the report which provided a briefing following the Motion adopted by Council at its meeting on 25th July, 2018 in relation to modern slavery and recommended an amendment to the Whistleblowing Policy so that it made explicit reference to modern slavery.

The Motion committed the Council to ensuring that the whistleblowing system for staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery be publicised. The current wording of the Whistleblowing Policy covered criminal activity and anyone could use the whistleblowing procedures to raise concerns about modern slavery, but the Policy did not specifically identify modern slavery as a matter which could be raised via whistleblowing procedures. Given the Council's commitments in relation to modern slavery it was, therefore, proposed that the wording of the Policy be amended to make explicit reference to modern slavery.

The Committee welcomed the amendment and highlighted the need for this to be widely publicised and for all citizens to be vigilant about slavery practices taking place in the borough.

**Resolved:-** That the detail of the Motion adopted by Council at its meeting on 25th July, 2018 be noted and the Whistleblowing Policy be amended to make explicit reference to modern slavery as set out at Paragraph 3.3 of the report, and that the Whistleblowing Policy be publicised as stated in the Council Motion.

**15. A REVIEW OF CONCERNS RAISED PURSUANT TO THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Consideration was given to the report and appendix presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, which provided an overview of the Whistleblowing cases which have been received over the past year.

The appendix to the report set out clearly the description of the concerns received and action.

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The Committee considered the reported matters in detail which would identify if there were any particular trends or issues. However, the Committee asked if more information could be provided on an activity log for timescales and whether or not a target date for completion would assist in preventing any unnecessary delays.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer agreed to check what was and not viable to assist the Committee in their consideration of trends moving forward.

**Resolved:-** That the Whistleblowing concerns raised over the previous year and the actions taken to address these matters be noted.

### 16. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE - CONSIDERATION OF COMPLAINTS

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, detailing the progress with the handling of complaints relating to breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and Town and Parish Councillors. The report listed the current cases of complaint and the action being taken in respect of each one and an updated complaint schedule was circulated.

Details of each related case and recommended outcome were highlighted.

Reference was made to Ref. No. 21/17 where the Committee was happy to proceed on the basis suggested to give the complainant seven days to provide his agreement to the documents being considered by the Monitoring Officer at Wakefield, failing which the complaint would be considered as concluded.

In respect of Ref. No. 03/18 it was confirmed that this complaint had now been concluded and that no further action would be taken.

The Committee also sought an update on the Committee on Standards in Public Life Review of Local Government Ethical Standards and whether there was anything further to report. The Deputy Monitoring Officer had nothing further to add at this stage, but confirmed that authorities had put forward their views as part of the consultation and these would be taken into account when the Committee on Standards in Public Life concluded its review which was due towards the end of the year.

**Resolved:-** (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the progress in respect of each case be noted pursuant to the Standards and Ethics Committee Complaints Procedure.

**17. OUTCOME OF A STANDARDS AND ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE HEARING REGARDING AN ALLEGED BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which set out clearly the outcome of a Standards and Ethics Sub-Committee Hearing which took place on 11th July, 2018 in relation to an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct for Members by a town or parish councillor. The Sub-Committee, in light of their findings, recommended the complaint be not upheld.

**Resolved:-** That the outcome of the Standards and Ethics Sub-Committee Hearing be noted.

**18. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

**Resolved:-** That the next meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee take place on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 at 2.00 p.m.