

STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE
10th March, 2022

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Z. Collingham, Cooksey, Tarmey, Mr. A. Buckley and Mrs. M. Carroll (Parish Council Representatives) and also Mr. P. Edler (Independent Co-optee).

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chair was Mr. P. Beavers and Mr. D. Roper-Newman (Independent Persons).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Griffin, Hughes and Mr. R. Swann (Parish Council Representative) and Mrs. A. Bingham, Mrs. M. Evers and Mrs. K. Penney (Independent Co-optees).

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for Minute Nos. 30, 31 and 32 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH NOVEMBER, 2021

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th November, 2021 were approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

It was noted that in terms of reports with any acronyms, a list of definition would be incorporated into future reports.

29. TRAINING UPDATE

Stuart Fletcher, Legal Manager, updated the Committee on recent training provided to Parish Councils on the use of social media, which was very positively received. Those Parish Councils who did attend would be thanked for their attendance with a further session being arranged later in the year.

In terms of the model Code of Conduct produced by the LGA and which had been adopted by the Council, training resources have been provided by the LGA to ensure consistency and these would be delivered to Members in further training sessions.

It was assumed the changes to any future sanctions legislation by the Government would be delayed, due to restrictions on Parliamentary time caused initially by the pandemic and now due to the ongoing conflict.

Resolved:- That the training updated be received and noted.

30. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AUDIT

Consideration was given to the report presented by Stuart Fletcher, Legal Manager, which detailed the outcome of an audit into the Whistleblowing Policy by Internal Audit.

The risks identified and the actions implemented were set out in detail as part of the report and provided assurance that the operation of the Whistleblowing Policy was working as it should.

The Committee sought clarification on a couple of points relating to inclusion of links to the Whistleblowing Policy in procurement and partnership documentation and the actions in place to track audit recommendations.

It was suggested that the Committee receive a further report in a year's time on the progress of the recommendations.

Resolved:- (1) That the outcome of an audit in respect of the operation of the Whistleblowing Policy be received and noted.

(2) That the Committee receive a further report in a year's time on the progress of the recommendations.

31. A REVIEW OF CONCERNS RAISED PURSUANT TO THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report and appendix presented by Stuart Fletcher, Legal Manager, which provided an overview of the Whistleblowing cases which have been received over the past year.

Particular reference was made to the appendix to the report which set out clearly the description of the concerns received and action taken.

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

32. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

Consideration was given to the report presented by Stuart Fletcher, Legal Manager, detailing the progress with the handling of complaints relating to breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and Town and

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Parish Councillors. The report listed the current cases of complaint and the action being taken in respect of each one.

Reference was made to each related case and recommended outcomes/actions identified were highlighted.

The Committee particularly welcomed the support of the Independent Persons who regarded the administration of complaints to be timely and effective.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

33. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Committee's consideration.

34. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee be held on Thursday, 16th June, 2022, commencing at 2.00 p.m. at the Town Hall.