Standards Committee

Thursday, 8 April 2021

Present: Councillor M Rankin (Chair)
Councillors S Brockbank, B Burdis, S Graham,
Janet Hunter, C Johnson, K Lee, F Lott and B Pickard

In attendance: Dr S Green and Mr G Clark, Independent Persons

SC14 /20 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

SC15 /20 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

SC16 /20 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

SC17 /20 Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous Standards Committee meeting held on 12 November 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

SC18 /20 LGA Model Code of Conduct

The Committee considered the report which informed the Committee of the LGAs recently published Model Code of Conduct and set out the differences between the model code and the Authority's current Code of Conduct.

It was noted that there were many similarities between the model code and the Authority's current Code of Conduct but there are also some differences.

The report recommended that the Committee establish a Working Group to consider the LGAs model against the Authority's current Code of Conduct in order to make recommendations as to whether any amendments should be made to the Code of Conduct. It was noted that any proposed changes to the Authority's Code of Conduct would be referred the constitution task group for consideration before being reported to Full Council for approval.

The Committee was in favour of setting up a task group to consider the Code of Conduct against the model Code.

There was some discussion about two issues raised by members and whether they should be covered by this task group. These related to matters of integrity and honestly in the way Councillors present information in political campaigns, and transparency and openness on imprints on campaign leaflets. It was noted that the current code of conduct covers issues of honesty and integrity in relation to the Nolan Principles, but the interpretation of the Nolan Principles could be covered by the working group. It was noted that issues around imprints on election leaflets were outside of the Code of Conduct which only applies to councillors, but that election issues can be referred to the Returning Officer or the police as appropriate.

An issue was also highlighted in relation to a point in the Code in relation to reporting suspicions around safeguarding, and whether this requirement should also extend to other matters of dishonesty. It was suggested that the working group could look at whether this requirement should be wider and should include reporting concerns around other criminal matters.

Cllrs Lott and Graham indicated an interest in joining the working group.

Resolved: That a working group of up to 4 members of the Committee be established in accordance with the political balance of the Authority, to review the Authority's current Code of Conduct against the LGAs model code and report back to this Committee with recommendations on whether any amendments should be made.

SC19 /20 Standards Committee Draft Annual Report 2020-21

The Committee considered the Standards Committee draft Annual Report for 2020-21.

Resolved: 1. That the draft Annual Report 2020-21 be noted;

2. That the Head of Law and Governance be authorised to finalise the report in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee and for the report to be submitted to the Annual Council meeting on 20 May 2021.