

Standards Committee

Thursday, 11 July 2019

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

Apologies: Councillors Janet Hunter and F Lott

SC119 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

SC219 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

SC319 Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous Standards Committee meeting held on 20 March 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

SC419 Standards Committee Action Plan/Work Programme 2019-20

The Committee considered the action plan/work programme for the year up to 31 March 2020.

It was noted that a review of the constitution is under way and this will include reviewing the code of conduct for Members. The review will incorporate consideration of the recommendations arising from the review of the Committee for Standards in Public Life's report on Government Ethical Standards to identify where the Authority is already meeting best practice and where there are areas where arrangements could be improved. Any changes would be reported to this Committee before being reported to the Constitution Task Group and Full Council for agreement.

It was also noted that the Monitoring Officer is considering the Authority's Local Arrangements for dealing with Complaints under the Code of Conduct, with a view to identifying ways to filter out frivolous complaints earlier in the process and reduce the burden on officer time. This could involve strengthening the powers of the Monitoring Officer as part of the initial assessment process. Any changes would be developed in consultation with this Committee.

Members noted that a number of complaints are related to social media. It was suggested that more training should be provided to Members on the use of social media.

Members raised an issue about declarations of interest in relation to their membership of

other bodies. It was noted that there was growing complexity around this issue with many members appointed to regional and national bodies outside of the Council and it can be unclear which code of conduct applies in each circumstance. It was noted that officers are considering this. Members were advised to seek advice from officers if they have any queries about declarations of interest in these situations.

Members raised the issue of Member Training. It was requested that a report be provided to the next meeting on Member Training and whether Members are undertaking the required training in line with the constitution.

Resolved:

That the Work programme for 2019/20 be agreed;

That a report be submitted to the next meeting on Member Training, including statistical information on the number of Members who have completed training in line with expectations;