



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 27 APRIL 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Dr Barton (Chair)

Councillor Rae Bhatia

Also present:

Mr Mike Galvin	Independent Member
Ms Jayne Kelly	Independent Member
Ms Alison Lockley	Independent Member
Mr Simon Smith	Independent Member
Mr David Lindley	Independent Person

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23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr Moore and Mr Michael Edwards.

24. QUORUM OF THE COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that it required three Councillors to be present for a quorum. Although a quorum was not present, the Committee could still continue to consider the business on the agenda; but any decisions could not be implemented until the minutes of the meeting were approved by the next quorate meeting of the Committee. It would not affect consideration of the draft reports as the Committee's comments would be incorporated into the final reports which would then be submitted to the Council for approval.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interest they may have in the business on the agenda. No such declarations were received.

26. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 8 November 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record.

27. CODE OF CONDUCT UPDATE

The Monitoring Officer submitted the Draft Report of the Standards Committee on the Review of the Member Code of Conduct. Members were asked to note the report and make any amendments prior to it being submitted to the Council for approval.

In accordance with Rule 1 of Part 4B of the Constitution (Access to Information – Procedure Rules) the report was not available in the public domain as it was in ‘draft’ form and was only circulated to Members of the Committee. Members were advised that if they wished to discuss specific individuals or circumstances, the Monitoring Officer may need to advise them to exclude the public and press to enable the meeting to continue in private session.

The Monitoring Officer commented that the Committee had considered the 26 recommendations of the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report in October 2020. The Committee had self-audited against those Best Practice points and recommended some changes to our Code of Conduct. Many of the 26 recommendations required legislative changes and the Government responded to the CSPL report in January 2022 declining to make any substantive changes to the existing law. The Committee had also reviewed the LGA Model Code of Conduct in November 2021, and the current draft report implemented the recommendations made by the Committee at that time. The Committee had recommended that the LGA Code of Conduct should not be adopted in its entirety parts of it should be added to the Council’s Code of Conduct.

The Committee commented that they were content with the changes that had been made and the Code of Conduct was clear and easily understandable.

Mr Lindley commented that he and Mr Edwards had discussed the changes and they felt it reflected their experience in dealing with complaints as well as pulling together other guidance.

Following comments made by the Committee the Monitoring Officer stated that:-

- He would change the heading for paragraph 6 of the Code of Conduct from ‘Other’ to ‘Validity of Acts’ to make it clear that the paragraph was a stand-alone paragraph and was not a follow on from paragraph 5 on Gifts and Hospitality.
- He would expressly cross-reference in the Code of Conduct the LGA Guidance, so that the latter could be used, as appropriate, to help to adjudicate on future complaints.
- The Code was embedded in the Council’s operations as all councillors

had mandatory training when elected to office and the code of conduct was one of those topics in the mandatory training programme. He also reported on complaints and outcomes to the Committee regularly and wrote to councillors after a complaint had been dealt with to include any suggestions for reparations. The Code of Conduct was approved by Council, so all councillors were aware of it and it was included in the Council's Constitution. Information on how to submit complaints against a councillor had its own dedicated platform on the website; so those looking for information did not have to search the whole of the webpages.

- If other councillors made comments on the suggested Code of Conduct when it was considered by Council, the Council would determine if those suggestions should be incorporated before the Code of Conduct was approved. If the Council meeting proposed amendments that were substantially different to those approved by the Standards Committee, then the Code should come back to this Committee before being finally approved by Council.
- Once the revised Code of Conduct had been approved, an all-member briefing could be arranged to explain the implications of changes to the Code.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received, and subject to the comment to change the heading of paragraph 6 in the Code of Conduct as outlined above, no further comments were made to the content of the draft report prior to the Monitoring Officer submitting the report to Council for approval

28. BIENNIAL COMPLAINTS ANALYSIS

The Monitoring Officer submitted the Draft Bi-Annual Report of the Standards Committee July 2019 - June 2021 which provided an analysis of cases referred. Members were asked to note the report and make any amendments prior to it being submitted to the Council for approval.

In accordance with Rule 1 of Part 4B of the Constitution (Access to Information – Procedure Rules) the report was not available in the public domain as it was in 'draft' form and was only circulated to Members of the Committee. Members were advised that if they wished to discuss specific individuals or circumstances, the Monitoring Officer may need to advise them to exclude the public and press to enable the meeting to continue in private session.

Mr Lindley, Independent Person, referred to paragraph 3.18 of the report where the manner of interaction between Councillors and their constituents had been radically altered by the various forms of lockdown and commented how well the culture of compliance with the Code of Conduct had been maintained during this difficult period, which had not been the same for a number of other local authorities.

The Committee liked the additional column to include details of where advice on reparation has been made.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received, and no comments were made to the content of the draft report prior to the Monitoring Officer submitting the report to Council for approval

29. COMPLAINT AGAINST COUNCILLORS - UPDATE

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report giving feedback on complaints against Councillors that had been reviewed and/or determined since the last meeting and updated the Committee on progress with outstanding complaints against Councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and noted.

30. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items notified to be discussed.

31. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.10pm.