



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Held: TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Dr Barton (Chair)

Councillor Joannou

Councillor Whittle

Councillor Dr Moore

Also present:

Ms Jayne Kelly

Independent Member

Ms Alison Lockley

Independent Member

Mr Simon Smith

Independent Member

Mr Mick Edwards

Independent Person

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Fiona Barber and Mike Galvin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they had in the business on the agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report on a review of the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer went through the Terms of Reference noting the changes. The only change was in item 10 which had been changed to reflect the new political balance of the Council.

In response to questions, it was noted that an extraordinary meeting was possible if no ordinary meeting of this Committee had been held for some time, and that Councillors could not investigate themselves so Sub-Committees

comprised a majority of Independent Members.

There was discussion on how to maintain the overseer function of the Committee when there were only two scheduled meetings of the Committee each year. It was suggested that a six-monthly update by email could be circulated to Committee Members relating to complaints logged, as well as any key deliverables against the Terms of Reference. The Monitoring Officer welcomed this idea.

AGREED:

That a six monthly be sent to Members updating on complaints received as well as any relevant updates against the Terms of Reference.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held 27 April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

5. BIENNIAL REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE JULY 2021 - JUNE 2023 ANALYSIS OF MEMBER COMPLAINTS

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report dealing with Elected Member complaints for the period 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2023.

The only point of note was around the new phenomenon of 'group' complaints. It was noted that in these cases it was clear who the 'leaders' of the complaining group were who could be reached out to.

AGREED:

That the Committee notes the report.

6. ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH STANDARDS COMPLAINTS AT LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

The Monitoring Officer submitted a copy of the current procedural 'arrangements', for review by the Committee. It was noted that these procedures were followed in every case.

There was discussion of the process around vexatious complaints. It was noted that if a complaint was rejected on grounds of being vexatious it would be logged and reported on in the normal way.

There was discussion around the process where a Councillor did not cooperate with the outcome of a complaint (e.g. for informal resolution by way of an apology). Currently the Arrangements state that matter is taken-up by the Monitoring Officer as a separate potential breach of the Code of Conduct. It was suggested that the complainant should nonetheless be able to revive the

original complaint else they would be left without resolution to their grievance.. The Monitoring Officer would consider options around this.

It was suggested that in cases where an incident causing a complaint occurs in a public forum, that it be encouraged that the Councillor in question apologise in a similar public forum where the Monitoring Officer and the statutory Independent Person felt this was appropriate. The Committee supported adding this option to the arrangements.

Other points for thought the Monitoring Officer raised were around the terminology for 'low-level breaches', and Member conduct outside of Council business, which included discussion on when a Member actually began as a Councillor.

AGREED:

1. That the Monitoring Officer is asked to consider options to allow complainants to 'row back;' complaints if the Councillor in question refuses to cooperate with the outcome of the original complaint.
2. That the Committee supports adding wording to the procedural arrangements that Councillors be encouraged to apologise in a public forum if the breach has occurred in a public forum.
3. The use of the term "low level" be reviewed and amended by the Monitoring Officer

7. COMPLAINT AGAINST COUNCILLORS - UPDATE

The Monitoring Officer submits a report giving feedback on complaints against Councillors reviewed and/or determined since the last meeting and updating the Committee on progress with outstanding complaints against Councillors.

It was noted that longer lasting cases were due to receiving persistent challenge throughout the process, rather than inactivity on the part of the M.O and I.P.

It was noted that at present there were 4 ongoing cases.

AGREED:

That the Committee notes the report.

8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.08pm.