

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the proceedings at a virtual meeting of the Standards Committee on Tuesday, 13 October 2020, at 6.30 p.m.

Present

Councillors

Matt Severn (Chairman)
Peter Thornton (Vice-Chairman)

Tom Harvey
Chris Hogg

John Holmes
Pete McSweeney

Mark Wilson

Independent Members

David Tweddle

Parish Members

David Peters

Peter Smillie

Officers

Una Bell

Case Management Team Leader

Linda Fisher

Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer)

Vicky McDonald

Operational Lead Case Management

S/10

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Following confirmation that the live stream of the meeting had commenced, the Chairman welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting of South Lakeland District Council's Standards Committee, in doing so, thanking all officers involved in the process for their work on the Virtual Meetings.

The Chairman referred to the new Government legislation allowing councils to conduct remote meetings and explained in detail to all taking part. He then invited Members of the Standards Committee, the Independent Person and Parish Members to introduce themselves, to advise whether they were taking part by video or audio and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the meeting. All Members present, including the Chairman himself, having indicated that this was the case, he then referred to officers present at the meeting who would introduce themselves when asked to address the meeting.

S/11

MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 7 July 2020.

S/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED – That it be noted that no declarations of interest were raised.

S/13 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

RESOLVED – That it be noted that there were no excluded items on the agenda.

S/14 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020

The Operational Lead, Case Management, presented the annual report of the Local Government Ombudsman for 2019/2020 and the summary of complaints and compliments received from April 2019 to March 2020.

The Operational Lead, Case Management, informed Members that in line with the introduction of Customer Connect, the Council had recently implemented an online system for logging, monitoring and responding to customer comments, compliments and complaints. In addition, following the implementation of the new online complaints reporting system, the Council had introduced a streamlined Complaints Policy which had reduced the number of complaint levels from three levels to two levels. She went on to provide detailed statistics which included a breakdown of the complaints received relating to service areas.

The Operational Lead, Case Management, drew Members attention to the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2019/20 letter, at Appendix 2 to the report and responded to questions raised by Members.

RESOLVED – That the annual report of the Local Government Ombudsman for 2019/20 and the summary of complaints and compliments received from April 2019 to March 2020, be received.

S/15 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented the Code of Conduct Complaints report. She informed Members that, at the time of writing the report, there were two active complaints which were awaiting further information and clarification prior to consideration by the Independent Person.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) outlined the complaints procedure.

RESOLVED – That the Code of Conduct Complaints report be noted.

S/16 STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented a verbal report on the Work Programme and drew Members attention to the previous meeting of the Standards Committee and the discussion which had taken place regarding the Local Government Association Civility in Public Life and the Review of the Model Code of Conduct, following which it had been agreed to focus the Work Programme on the Code of Conduct for Members. She informed Members that since the submission in response to the consultation, nothing had been received in terms of any proposals in relation to the Code of Conduct. However, plans were in place to

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deliver virtual training on the Code of Conduct to District and Parish Councillors, which would be facilitated using Microsoft Teams.

Discussion took place regarding Microsoft Teams and its accessibility to Co-opted Members and whether other meeting platforms could be considered. Members agreed that due regard should be given to the accessibility for all Councillors and Co-optees to virtual meetings and training.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) agreed that virtual meetings and training needed to be inclusive and undertook to clarify the situation regarding inclusivity of Microsoft Teams Live Events and possible other options with the IT Lead Specialist.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be received.

S/17**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman, prior to closing the meeting, expressed thanks to all who had participated and officers for their efforts for facilitating the meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.16 p.m.