

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the proceedings at a virtual meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday, 20 April 2021, at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Councillors

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

Chris Hogg
John Holmes

Pete McSweeney
Mark Wilson

Also in attendance at the meeting were David Peters (Chairman of South Lakeland District Association of District Councils and Natland Parish Councillor) and Peter Smillie (Arnside Parish Councillor), and David Tweddle (Independent Person).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Harvey.

Officers

Tom Dugdale	Case Management Officer
Linda Fisher	Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer)
Louisa Wania	Case Management Officer

S/18 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/19 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 13 October 2020.

S/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

S/21 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

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

S/22 ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Committee and Council in general for their perseverance and adherence to standards and the code of conduct during the ongoing pandemic.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report, stating that there had been ten complaints made since April 2020, nine of which were related to Parish Councillors and one related to a District Councillor. She further clarified that the majority of matters had been dealt with by way of no further action and that no hearings had been necessary. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) also stated that the Members' Register of Interests continued to be maintained and updates as and when Members notified her of changes. She explained the training that had been provided to Councillors, noting that Covid 19 had resulted in no requirements to provide Induction Training for new members on the Code of Conduct, however, refresher training had been provided to District and Parish Council Members.

RESOLVED – That the report is agreed and referred to Full Council.

S/23 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented the report, noting that due to Covid 19 there had been some delay in dealing with some complaints.

In the discussion, Councillors raised the question of possible Social Media complaints and the possibility of providing training around this issue. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) stated that the Member Support Steering Group (MSSG) and Local Government Association (LGA) had already provided a social media toolkit. She further stated that since 2019 there had been no social media complaints raised. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Officer (Monitoring Officer) stated that this would be picked up in the training programme and noted the point for action. A further point noted for action as a result of Members' discussion on the item was to make an addition to Appendix 1 in future to show not only the date a complaint had been received but also the date a complaint had been resolved. This action was noted by the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

S/24 SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT, ARRANGEMENTS AND GUIDANCE REVISION

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented the report which requested that the Standards Committee recommended the changes to the Code of Conduct, arrangements and guidance to Council recommending that it

adopts the LGA Code of Conduct (as amended), the Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Matters and the Code of Conduct Guidance, as set out in the report.

Members considered the report and discussed certain definitions and possible changes to be made. These points would be summarised and included within the report to Council. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) was asked to clarify Appendix 1 and box 11 to consider and change the wording to be consistent with other responses. Further the standards committee consider the levels for declaration of gifts and hospitality but no changes were proposed, the Monitoring Officer was requested to seek clarification of the position across Cumbria and to clarify this in the report to Council. The Monitoring Officer agreed to consider wording and consistency highlighted at the meeting before presenting the report to the Council meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Standards Committee recommends to Council that it adopts the LGA Code of Conduct (as amended), the Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Matters and the Code of Conduct Guidance, as set out in the Report.

S/25

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - ASSURANCE REVIEW OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS AND DECLARATIONS

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented the report to update Members on the internal audit review and the register of interests and gifts and hospitality for employees and Members for the period April 2020 to April 2021. She stated that in that period there had been one Councillor declaration of a gift and one Officer declaration of a gift. She further highlighted that a Council wide Governance and Accountability working Group had been set up which was to meet for the first time in May 2021.

RESOLVED – That the report and the actions be noted.

S/26

STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME APRIL 2021- MAY 2022

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented the Standards Committee's Work Programme for 2021/2022. She outlined the Work Programme for the new municipal year and stated that the Standards Training in the past year had been received well.

RESOLVED – That the Standards Committee's Work Programme for 2021/2022 be noted.

The meeting ended at 3.18 p.m.