

## Standards Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Thursday, 21 June 2018 at the Committee Room 2, Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

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**Standards Committee members present:**

Councillors Ian Amos, Barry Birch, Sue Catterall and Terry Lees

**Apologies:**

Councillor(s) Ruth Duffy and Matthew Vincent

**Other councillors present:**

None

**Officers present:**

Roy Saunders, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager  
Liesl Hadgraft, Head of Business Support and Monitoring Officer

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

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**1 Election of Chairman**

**Agreed** that Cllr B Birch be elected as Chairman of the Committee for the 2018/19 Council Year.

**2 Election of Vice Chairman**

**Agreed** that Cllr Catterall be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2018/19 Council Year.

**3 Declarations of interest**

None.

**4 Confirmation of Minutes**

**Agreed** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 March 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

## 5 Code of Conduct Hearings

**Agreed** that the minutes of the two standards code of conduct hearings held on 14 March 2018 be noted.

## 6 Social Media Policy for Councillors

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report on a revised proposed social media policy for Councillors.

The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that this revised version had been drawn up by a Member working group, following the deferral of the previous policy at the Council meeting on 7 December 2018. She said that the working group had met on three occasions and that both she and the Communications and Marketing Manager had been invited to attend the last meeting of the working group to provide input and discuss the proposed changes.

Nothing included in the previously submitted policy had been left out, but a number of clarifications and additions had been inserted. The main areas of change were as follows.

- In Section 1.5: Reference to the policy being referred to by the Standards Committee when considering any social media related complaints against town or parish councils if their council did not have their own social media policy.
- In Section 2.2 (b): Clarification of when councillors would be considered to be acting in their capacity as a councillor when using social media. This had been debated extensively by the working group and was an area which was key when considering complaints surrounding the use of social media. The view of the majority of the working group had been that it would be hard for a member of the public to know when a councillor was acting in a public or private capacity. The working group had therefore agreed that in the case of complaint relating to social media the view would be taken that a councillor was acting in their role as a councillor *“because the judgement of whether you are perceived to be acting as a councillor will most likely be taken by someone else”*.
- In Section 2.9 - Clarification of the advice to councillors on the use of social media during pre-election “purdah” periods, particularly about the use of council resources.

**Agreed** that the contents of the revised Social Media Policy attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed for submission to the Council for approval on 19 July 2018.

## 7 Review of Ethical Standards in Local Government: Response to consultation

The Monitoring Officer submitted a copy of the consultation response which

had been sent, following the discussion at the last meeting of the Standards Committee, to the Committee on Standards in Public Life for consideration during its review of ethical standards in Local Government.

The Monitoring Officer said that she would report back to the Committee on the outcome of the consultation, when known, and on any proposed changes arising from it. She reminded the Committee that it had also agreed at its last meeting that, in the meantime, Wyre's own Code of Conduct should be reviewed. She suggested that, in the light of the recent experience with the revision of the social media policy, a working group involving members of the Standards Committee be formed to review the Councillors Code of Conduct and the process for dealing with alleged breaches of it, prior to formal consideration by the Committee and submission to the full Council for approval.

**Agreed** that the response submitted and the intention to set up a working party to on behalf of the Council be noted.

## **8 Current complaints: summary**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a schedule summarising complaints of alleged breaches of the Council's code of conduct which were currently being processed or had been completed since the last report to the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer said that brief details of each complaint were included in the schedule. She pointed out that on complainant ref: 2017/09, the complainant was a member of the public and the subject member was a Wyre Councillor, not the other way round as stated in the schedule.

The Monitoring Officer provided further information on each of the complaints to the Committee at the meeting, as follows:

### **Ref: 2017/05**

Additional questions raised by the complainants had been considered and the complaint had now been concluded.

### **Ref: 2017/06**

Additional questions raised by the complainants had been considered and the complaint had now been concluded.

### **Ref: 2017/09**

No further action was to be taken and the complaint had now been concluded.

### **Ref: 2018/01**

The complaint had been considered, but no further action was to be taken and the complaint had now been concluded.

### **Ref: 2018/02**

This complaint was still ongoing and information was currently being gathered.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed, in response to a question, that complaints Ref 2017/07 and 2017/06 had been submitted by the same councillors but were about different subject members.

**Agreed** that the summary of complaints submitted by the Monitoring Officer and her verbal report on each of the complaints referred to, be noted.

**9 Date of next meeting**

**Agreed** that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee be held at 6pm on 15 November 2018.

The meeting started at 5.30pm and finished at 6pm.

**Date of Publication:** 5 July 2018.