



## Standards Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Thursday, 12 March 2020 at the CivicCentre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

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### **Standards Committee members present:**

Councillors Catterall, Sir R Atkins, Gerrard, Swales and Orme.

### **Apologies for absence:**

Cllr B Birch and Barry Parsonage (Independent Person).

### **Other councillors present:**

None.

### **Officers present:**

Liesl Hadgraft, Head of Business Support and Monitoring Officer  
Mary Grimshaw, Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Roy Saunders, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager.

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

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### **13 Apologies for Absence**

### **14 Declarations of Interest**

### **15 Minutes**

**Agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

### **16 Code of Conduct Amendment: Definition of Anti-Semitism**

The Monitoring Officer submitted proposed wording on a definition of Anti-Semitism, for inclusion in the Councillor's Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer explained that, following the Government's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of Anti-Semitism in 2017, councils had been encouraged to formally adopt the definition as a clear message that Anti-Semitic behaviour would not be tolerated. The most recent correspondence encouraging the Council to take this stance had been received from the Secretary of State for Housing

Communities and Local Government in October 2019. It was had therefore been decided that specific reference would be made in the relevant council policies for employees. Those additions had been agreed at the Employment and Appeals Committee meeting in February 2020. For consistency, this committee was now being asked to consider recommending the Council to include the same definition in the Members Code of Conduct.

**Agreed** to recommend to the Council:

1. That the following additional wording be included as paragraph 1.3 of the Councillors Code of Conduct:

*Every Councillor has a duty to behave in a non-discriminatory way towards all individuals with whom he/she has contact at work, including employees, members of the local community, customers and other Councillors.*

*As part of the Council's commitment to anti-discrimination and tackling Hate Crime we endorse the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Anti-Semitism details of which are shown in Appendix C.*

2. That the IRHA definition of Anti-Semitism, as submitted to the meeting, be included as Appendix C of the Council's Code of Conduct.
3. That the updated version of the Code of Conduct be included as Part 5.01 of the Council's Constitution, in place of the current version.

## **17 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 which had been completed since the last meeting of the Committee. She said that the majority of complaints on the schedule related to 2019 and, with the exception of one, all of the complaints submitted in 2019 had been concluded.

The Monitoring Officer provided further information on each of the complaints referred to in the schedule, as follows.

### **2019/10**

The Monitoring Officer said that, at the last meeting, she had reported that a resolution of this complaint had been delayed, as it had not been possible to meet with the subject member. That meeting had now taken place between the subject member, herself and the Independent Person. The subject member had acknowledged that the comments they had made on social media had been inappropriate and a written apology had voluntarily been made to the complainant. The complaint had therefore been satisfactorily dealt with and no further action was proposed.

## **2019/12**

The Monitoring Officer reminded members that she had reported at the last meeting that insufficient information had been supplied by the complainant and, what information that had been provided, was difficult to decipher. In their initial complaint, the complainant had promised to provide more information, but this had still not been forthcoming. Therefore, as agreed at the last meeting, she now intended to write to the complainant advising that that as no further information has been received, the complaint would be closed and no further action would be taken.

## **2019/13**

The Monitoring Officer said that this complaint had been received and logged following the last standards meeting. She had met with the Independent Person to discuss the details and they had determined that the complaint did not pass the preliminary test. This was because the subject member had not been acting in their capacity as a councillor at the time the alleged complaint had taken place. Therefore, no further action would be taken.

## **2019/14**

The Monitoring Officer said that this complaint related to a subject member having involvement with an organisation which was not listed on their register of interest. She and the Independent Person had met with the subject member to obtain clarification about what this involvement entailed. To err on the side of caution, it had been agreed that the member would add further information to the register about their involvement with the organisation referred to by the complainant. That information had now been included. Therefore, no further action was required.

## **2019/15**

The Monitoring Officer said that the subject member in this complaint had made comments on social media which could be misinterpreted. She and the Independent Person had met with the subject member who had acknowledged that the comments made were inappropriate. It had been agreed that the subject member would attend the social media training session for councillors which was being arranged at that time. The subject member had subsequently attended the training.

## **2020/01**

The Monitoring Officer said that this was the first complaint received in 2020. She and the Independent Person had met first with the complainant to gather further information and then with the complainant to obtain their response to the allegation made. The subject member had given a detailed explanation and had provided written records and other factual evidence which had satisfied both her and the Independent person that the matter complained about had been handled appropriately by the subject member. Therefore, no further action was to be taken.

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

**18 Date of next Meeting**

**Noted** that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was at 6pm on 18 June 2020.

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 2.47 pm.

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