

Standards Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Thursday, 15 November 2018 at the CivicCentre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Standards Committee members present:

Councillors I Amos, B Birch, Catterall, Lees and Orme

Apologies for absence:

Councillor(s) Matthew Vincent

Officers present:

Mary Grimshaw, Senior Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Liesl Hadgraft, Head of Business Support and Monitoring Officer
Roy Saunders, Democratic services and Scrutiny manager.

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

10 Apologies for Absence

11 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Orme declared a significant interest (non-pecuniary) in agenda item 5 (Summary of Current Complaints) because he had been informed that he was the subject member in complaint Ref: 2018/03. He said that he would withdraw from the meeting if that complaint was discussed.

12 Minutes

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 June 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

13 Review of Councillors Code of Conduct and Complaints Process

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report or proposed arrangements for a review of the Councillors Code of Conduct and of the Council's procedures for dealing with alleged breaches of eth Code.

She reminded Members that reference to the intention to undertake a review had been made at the last Standards Committee meeting. Since then the Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager

and herself had met to discuss what could be done to make the Code stronger within the scope of the provisions in the Localism Act and how the review could best be progressed. The matters for consideration would mainly around behavioural issues, particularly those listed in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

She confirmed that the proposed time table for the working group would allow sufficient time for a revised code of conduct to be approved at the full Council meeting in April 2019 so that guidance on it could be included in the induction/training programme for all Members following the May elections.

Agreed:

1. That a working group of 7 Councillors (5 to be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group and 2 by the Leader of the Labour group) be set up to review Wyre's Councillor Code of Conduct and the process for dealing with alleged breaches of eth Code.
2. That the working group's recommendations be reported to the Standards Committee for consideration and endorsement on 14 March 2019, prior to submission the full Council for approval on 4 April 2019.

14 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 report to the Committee.

She provided further information on each of the complaints, as follows:

Ref: 2018/02

This complaint has been considered but no further action was to be taken.

2018/03

(Cllr Orme, having declared an interest at the start of the meeting, left the room whilst this complaint was considered)

This had been quite a high profile complaint and was an example of the pitfalls of social media and how a relatively trivial issue could easily escalate. The comment made by the subject member had been flippant and inappropriate. However, the subject member had subsequently apologised on the Facebook page where the initial comment had been made. Following a discussion with one of the Council's Independent persons and, in light of the apology that had been made, a decision had been made that no further action would be taken.

2018/04

This was quite a recent complaint. Further clarification was being sought from the complainant to determine whether the complaint needed to be progressed further. Unfortunately, attempts to contact the complainant had so far has been unsuccessful. The case was therefore ongoing.

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

15 Date of next Meeting

Agreed that the next meeting of the Committee be held at 6pm on 14 March 2019.

The meeting started at 6pm and finished at 6.20pm.

Date of Publication: 22 November 2018.