

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 13 November 2019.

PRESENT: Mr J A Kite, MBE (Chairman), Mr R H Bird (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, MBE, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr J P McInroy and Mr C Simkins

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager), Mrs J Hicks (Civic Engagement Officer), Mr T Godfrey (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

9. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

None.

10. Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2019

(Item 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2019 were taken as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. Monitoring Officer's Update

(Item 4)

(1) Mr Watts, the Monitoring Officer, introduced his update on the Kent Code of Conduct for Members, which included an update on the review into Local Government Ethical Standards conducted by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL). An appendix was circulated which listed code of conduct complaints received since the last meeting and how these had been addressed.

(2) In relation to a recommendation from the CSPL review it was confirmed that there would be a consultation carried out by the Local Government Association on a proposed revised draft model code of conduct in 2020.

(3) The Committee discussed the importance of mutual respect amongst Members in meetings. It was agreed that there was a delicate balance between Members showing respect for colleagues and speaking passionately about issues.

(4) It was suggested that meeting etiquette and expected standards for Members at meetings should be included in the training provided for new Members. Mr Watts emphasised the importance of not overregulating political debates but confirmed the intention was to provide training for Members on equalities with an emphasis on how behaviour could be perceived by others.

(5) Mr Watts undertook to circulate the summary of the Internal Audit on County Council Values and Behaviours which had been submitted to Governance and Audit Committee on 24 April 2019.

(6) RESOLVED that –

- a) the Monitoring Officer produce a draft response to the proposed consultation on the draft model code of conduct and circulate it to Members of the Committee for comments and that it be delegated to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Members of the Committee, to submit a response on behalf of the Committee and the agreed response be circulated to all Members; and
- b) the report on the action taken by the Monitoring Officer be noted.

12. Exclusion of Press and Public

(Item 5)

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEM

(open minute)

13. Monitoring Officers verbal update on Member Standards

(Item 6)

(1) Mr Watts outlined the facts of a Code of Conduct complaint.

(2) RESOLVED that, if the Monitoring Officer determines that the complaint should be investigated, the Chairman be consulted on convening a meeting of the Panel or the Committee in accordance with the arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints under the Localism Act 2011.