

At a meeting of the Standards Committee held in Council Chamber, Allerdale House on Tuesday 18 February 2020 at 10.00 am

Members

Councillor Malcolm Grainger
Councillor Alan Smith

Councillor Peter Gaston (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Andrew Semple
Councillor Will Wilkinson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Owen Martin, Councillor Peter Kendall and Councillor Lynda Williams

Staff Present

L Jardine, S Sewell, E Thompson and L Tomlinson

Also Present

T.Cook (Independent Person)

Councillor Gaston was Chair for the ensuing meeting

362. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019 were signed as a correct record.

363. Declaration of interests

None declared

364. Questions

None received.

365. Work Programme 2019/20

The Monitoring Officer presented the work programme for the remainder of 2019/20.

Members noted the contents of the work programme.

366. Allerdale Borough Council's Code of Conduct and Arrangements for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011

At the last meeting of the committee (10 September 2021) members deferred the decision to approve the recommendations in relation to the code of conduct to allow for comments from the Cumbrian Monitoring Officer Group.

At this meeting the Monitoring Officer provided an update and response from the Cumbrian Monitoring Officer Group

Members then approved the following recommendations to the code of conduct;

1. Failure to cooperate with a standards investigation should be added as a potential breach of the Code. (Para 95)
2. The Council should consider whether the Code should say that members must have regard to the social media policy (Para 96)
3. The interests' provisions in the Allerdale Code should be expanded to make it clear that members should not make decisions where matters relate to or clearly affect their family members or close associates. (Para 106)
4. Any changes made to the Allerdale Code should be effectively communicated and explained to the parish council sector. (Para 107)

367. To Review the Process and Guidance for Gifts and Hospitality for Members

The Democratic Services Manager presented the item, providing members with an overview of the report.

Members were also provided some background to the Gifts and Hospitality Register including steps taken by other authorities.

Following member queries, the current gifts and hospitality register will be updated to allow for members to update online.

Members noted the contents of the report and approved the recommendations

368. To review the operation and efficiency of the Whistle blowing Policy

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Manager presented this item and provided an overview of the whistleblowing policy, details of confidentiality, and how concerns are reported and responded to.

Members asked questions in relation to raising concerns, best practice and internal audits.

Members noted the contents of the report.

369. To review the Code of Conduct for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters

The Democratic Services officer presented the draft code of conduct for members and officers dealing with planning matters. The code has been based on an example code set out in 'Knowles on Public Authority Meetings' and has

been implemented to assist both members and officers when dealing with planning matters.

Key areas the draft code covers include

- Interests
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Conduct
- Lobbying
- Contact with applicants, developers, objectors.

Members discussed the content of the draft document and debate ensued in relation to interests and the extent of a relationship when members know the applicant, the monitoring officer provided clarity on the issue and advised members to contact officers if they are unsure, further guidance surrounding interests will be added to the draft document, including examples.

Members then discussed 'dual hatters' and recommended that the document contain further guidance on this area.

Officers confirmed that the recommended amendments and additions to the draft code will be made.

370. To receive an update on Member Training Programmes

The Monitoring Officer provided members with an update since the May 2019 election.

The update covered the training undertaken in the induction, with members being advised that some training sessions were well attended, however many sessions had less than 50% attendance.

Members debated personal development and the personal development plan (PDP), with suggestions that the PDP should be simplified.

Training was then discussed with some members questioning whether mandatory attendance can be imposed, officers clarified that this is only applicable for members that sit on Licensing and Development Panel.

Questions were asked of officers over the SMT 'community champion' and debate ensued in relation to this, some members felt that this is a good way to establish links and communication with officers however that it needs to be improved. Feedback will be provided to SMT via the Monitoring Officer.

Questions were then asked of the Monitoring Officer in relation to interests and the Register of Interest Form. Concerns were then raised that the form can be difficult to understand and members can be unsure what to declare in which section. The Monitoring Officer will work with Democratic Services to introduce a 'user guide' and develop training to assist members.

Members noted the contents of the update.

371. Review of Complaints (October 2019 - January 2020)

The Monitoring Officer provided members with an overview of the complaints received between October 2019 and January 2020. The main theme of the complaints was in relation to social media and comments posted by members.

Members were also provided with an update of ongoing issues at certain Town and Parish Councils.

To support members Social Media Training will be scheduled to provide guidance and support on how to use social media as an elected member.

The meeting closed at 11.20 am