

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 13 JANUARY 2020

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 18 FEBRUARY 2020

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr John Robini (Chairman)	Cllr John Gray
Cllr Michael Goodridge (Vice Chairman)	Cllr Jerry Hyman
Cllr Brian Adams	Cllr Robert Knowles

Apologies

Cllr Paul Follows, Cllr Penny Marriott and Cllr Peter Marriott

STD 13/19 MINUTES (Agenda item 1.)

The Minutes of the meeting which took place on 30 September 2019 were confirmed and signed.

STD 14/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda item)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Follows, Peter and Penny Marriott.

STD 15/19 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3.)

It was noted that Councillor Jerry Hyman was one of the Members referred to in the Monitoring Officer's Report. The details of the Standards hearing were already in the public domain.

STD 16/19 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4.)

There were no questions from members of the public.

STD 17/19 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 5.)

There were no questions from Members of the Council.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

There were no recommendations to Council.

PART II - MATTERS OF REPORT

The background papers relating to the following items are as set out in the reports included in the original agenda papers.

STD 18/19 MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT (Agenda item 6.)

- 18.1 The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer, Robin Taylor, on complaints received since January 2019. The report summarised the complaints received since the last report and also updated on a number of matters that fell within its remit.
- 18.2 The Committee noted that a number of informal complaints related to comments written by elected members in emails or posted online. This type of media could be shared widely and quickly with an audience the original author may not have intended. Combined with the absence of tone of voice and context, electronic communications were far more likely to lead to allegations of code breaches than any other form, especially when sent in haste.
- 18.3 Councillor Gray commented that there was no reference to whistle blowing which he felt was relevant, and he had not seen where this was reported. Officers responded that this was a function of the Audit Committee and they would look at when this was last reported.
- 18.4 The Committee discussed the role of the committee, and how they could learn from complaints received to promote ethical standards. The Committee noted that training had been provided to all Waverley Borough Councillors following the elections, and to the three Town Councils, and Cranleigh Parish Council. Further training would be provided on a regular basis, and consideration was being given on how this could be delivered to all the parish councils.
- 18.5 Following consideration of the report, the Committee NOTED the Monitoring Officer's report.

STD 19/19 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS' - REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARD IN PUBLIC LIFE REPORT (Agenda item 7.)

- 19.1 The Committee received a report reviewing the findings and recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) as set out in its report on Local Government Ethical Standards. The Committee was asked to consider the recommendations and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to take steps to ensure compliance with the best practice recommendations.
- 19.2 The Committee was advised that the CSPL had concluded that whilst the majority of councillors and officers maintained high standards of conduct, there was clear evidence of misconduct by a minority of councillors. The headline recommendation was to give local authorities the power to suspend, without allowances, councillors for up to six months but this would require legislative changes and was part of a package of reforms. The CSPL had made 26 recommendations, mostly requiring revision of legislation or regulations. There were 15 best practice recommendations which the CSPL considered should be implemented by all local authorities.

- 19.3 The Committee noted that the Local Government Association was working on developing an updated model Member Code of Conduct. Waverley had a good level of compliance with the recommended best practice, but there was scope to improve the Council's Arrangements for dealing with Standards Allegations to provide greater transparency about proceedings and embed best practice.
- 19.4 The Committee agreed in principle the implementation of the best practice recommendations, and noted that the Monitoring Officer would report back to the next Committee meeting on proposed revisions to the Council's Arrangements for dealing with Standards allegations in order to meet compliance with best practice.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 6.10 pm

Chairman