

**Minutes of the Standards Committee
28 July 2021**

Present:

I. Winter (Chairman)
Dylan Price (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell	K.M. Grant	R.W. Sider BEM
J.R. Boughtflower	S.C. Mooney	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
R.D. Dunn	O. Rybinski	

In Attendance: Councillor Bateson

272/21 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

273/21 Establishment of the Committee System Working Group

The Committee considered a report on the establishment of the Committee System Working Group. The Monitoring Officer explained the former Committee System Working Group agreed it should meet periodically to evaluate the success of the Committee System, and these arrangements needed to be established under the Committee System. The membership previously comprised the group leaders of all political groups, and the report proposed this membership remain the same.

Some members of the Committee expressed concern that this representation was disproportionate to the political representation of the council and requested that a larger membership be considered in effort to capture feedback from more members of the political groups. The Monitoring Officer explained the aim would be for the members to provide their feedback through their political group leader, and clarified the Committee System Working Group would have no decision-making powers and any recommendations would be presented to the Standards Committee before going to full Council. If the Committee System Working Group were not established, feedback would need to be provided through such methods as surveys or e-mails.

During the debate, it was raised that having an independent chair present for the meetings would allow all political groups to voice their concerns and opinions. Some felt that expanding the membership would make the group too

large. Some members felt it was too soon to establish the Committee System Working Group to review the Committee System.

A motion was put forward by Councillor Mooney that the membership of the Committee System Working Group include the political group leaders alongside an additional representative from each political group as well as an independent chair. This was seconded by Cllr Boughtflower. The proposal was voted on and resulted in an equality of votes.

Councillor Smith-Ainsley requested the original proposal in the report be put forward and that the Committee System Working Group be established with the previously agreed membership. This was seconded by Cllr Rybinski. The proposal was voted on and resulted in an equality of votes.

Councillor Smith-Ainsley put forward a motion to amend the original proposal to include an independent chairman. This was seconded by Cllr R Dunn. The proposal was voted on and resulted in an equality of votes.

Councillor Mooney proposed the item be deferred for the Monitoring Officer to consult with the political group leaders on a solution. This was seconded by Councillor Smith-Ainsley and unanimously agreed by the Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to defer the Establishment of the Committee System Working Group.

274/21 Code of Conduct Guidance

The Committee received the guidance on the model Councillor Code of Conduct issued by the Local Government Association (LGA).

The Committee noted the guidance was thorough and that all councillors should note the document.

The Committee **resolved** to note the guidance on the model Councillor Code of Conduct issued by the Local Government Association (LGA).

275/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following matter on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 (Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Committee in making its decision had regard to all circumstances and was satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Resolved that in the interest of having an open discussion about the matter, the press and public are excluded from the meeting.

276/21 Update on complaints relating to the Code of Conduct

The Committee received the report relating to updates on complaints relating to the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer introduced the report and asked the Committee to note the decisions taken by the Monitoring Officer in relation to the complaints detailed.

The Committee expressed concern over the length of time that had been taken to address the complaints and requested assessment panels be scheduled more promptly in future. The Monitoring Officer explained the circumstances surrounding the delays and confirmed that assessment panels were in the process of being scheduled.

The Committee also discussed the possibility of requesting Councillors sign the new LGA Code of Conduct guidance as it may remind councillors about their expected behaviour, and also evaluate whether any complaint they may make is valid. The Monitoring Officer explained that when Councillors were elected, they were bound by the Members Code of Conduct and that she is exploring the possibility of providing training on the Members Code of Conduct to be given to all members.

The Committee requested clarification on whether the group leaders are informed when someone in their political party has a complaint made against them. The Monitoring Officer confirmed this, and explained that if the group leader is not able to resolve the issue, the complaint is then taken to an assessment panel.

The Committee **resolved** to note the decisions taken by the Monitoring Officer in relation to the complaints detailed in the report..