

**Minutes of the Standards Committee
16 February 2023**

Present:

I. Winter (Chairman)

Councillors:

K.M. Grant	S.C. Mooney
I.T.E. Harvey	R.W. Sider BEM

Substitutions: Councillors C. Bateson (In place of R.D. Dunn)

Apologies: Councillors M.M. Attewell and J.R. Boughtflower

In Attendance: Councillors M. Beecher

1/23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

2/23 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor S. Mooney declared that she was a Surrey County Councillor.

3/23 Induction Programme 2023

The Committee considered a report from the Committee Manager on the Member Induction Programme for 2023. The Committee Manager explained the process and consultations undertaken for compiling the Induction Programme for new members. The Monitoring Officer requested that the Committee consider approving a further recommendation to authorise changes to the Member's Code of Conduct to clarify that members could not participate in committee meetings unless they have undertaken relevant training.

The Committee felt the proposed induction programme was comprehensive. The Committee queried provision to ensure members attending training, and

were informed that the induction programme would be provided to all candidates standing in the election in April, and in extreme cases, training could be recorded or hybrid options could be provided. Some members of the Committee queried the cost of hiring external trainers when some training could be provided by Council officers. The Committee acknowledged it would be beneficial to utilise external trainers for impartiality.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend to Council to:

- 1) Approve the proposed Member's Induction Programme for 2023
- 2) Authorise the Group Head of Corporate Governance to make changes to the Programme to reflect any necessary amendments
- 3) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to amend the Member's Code of Conduct in accordance with Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 – Amendments to the Members' Code of Conduct

The following is to be added as 8.1.1:

"I shall not participate in any Committee meeting until I have completed the relevant mandatory training."

4/23 Withdrawal from Spelthorne Joint Committee

The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer requesting that the Standards Committee recommend to Council that the functions of the Spelthorne Joint Committee be delegated to appropriate Committees. The Monitoring Officer explained that Surrey County Council (SCC) had issued notice that the Joint Committee would no longer continue. The Constitution now required amending to clarify how Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments would be considered.

The Committee expressed disappointment at SCC's decision to dissolve the joint committees. The Committee requested clarification regarding the operation of the CIL task groups and recommended that the Monitoring Officer liaise with the lead officer of the CIL task groups to clarify future arrangements. The Committee felt the proposal for the Environment and Sustainability Committee to consider CIL bids under £1 million, and for Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to consider CIL bids over £1 million was appropriate.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend to Council that:

- 1) The cessation of all the Borough Council's non-executive and advisory functions from the Spelthorne Joint Committee's remit as set out in the Joint Committee Constitution, be approved with immediate effect and
- 2) Those functions be delegated to the appropriate Committee as set out in Paragraphs 3.5 to 3.10 of the report.

5/23 Councillor DBS Checks

The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer regarding Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks for Councillors. The Committee were asked to make a recommendation to Council to note the new grounds

for disqualification from being elected or a member of a local authority introduced by the Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022. New members would carry out DBS checks once elected to provide reassurance that they were fit and proper to hold office.

The Committee felt that members being requested to undertake DBS checks was appropriate for their roles. Some members expressed concern over equipment and technical knowledge required to complete the DBS checks and it was confirmed that support would be provided to complete the process if required.

The Committee **resolved** to note the new grounds for disqualification from being elected to, or being a member of, a local authority that have been introduced by the Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022 as set out in the report; and to recommend to Council to:

- a) Approve the introduction of Basic Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) for all councillors;
- b) Agree to adopt the DBS Checks for Members Protocol for inclusion in the Council's Constitution at Appendix B; and
- c) Agree to delegate to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the terms of reference of the Standards Committee, to include the resolution of issues concerning the discharge of members' roles in light of DBS check responses.

6/23 Update on Member Complaints

The Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer providing them with updates on complaints made under the Members' Code of Conduct. She provided a summary of the complaints that were currently open.

The Committee queried the length of time taken to deal with some complaints. The Monitoring Officer explained the various factors and processes that may delay the time processing and addressing complaints, but assured members they were being dealt with in as timely a fashion as possible.

The Committee requested that the Monitoring Officer provide a timeline for the live complaints after the meeting as well as further information regarding complaints missing from the table attached to the report.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update on member complaints.