

**Minutes of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee
4 February 2021**

Present:

Ian Winter (Chairman)
Dylan Price (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell	R.W. Sider BEM
C.L. Barratt	V. Siva
I.J. Beardsmore	
R.D. Dunn	
K.M. Grant	I.T.E. Harvey

Apologies: There were none.

Councillors in attendance:

Councillor R. Barratt, Councillor C. Bateson, Councillor A. Brar, Councillor S. Buttar, Councillor V.J. Leighton, Councillor O. Rybinski.

28/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

29/21 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

30/21 New model Code of Conduct

The Committee considered a report that proposed a recommendation to Council the adoption of the new Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct from the date of Annual Council.

The Group Head of Corporate Governance explained that the new code had developed over time after extensive consultation and had been designed to address the changing world and addressed more current issues such as the use of social media.

The Committee were advised that the development of the code had been centred around the work of the Committee for Standards in Public Life and the purpose of the Code was to ensure there would be a clear and consistent approach across all Councils at all levels. The Code would still be centred around the Nolan principles.

The Group Head of Corporate Governance explained that the Code encouraged Councils to take ownership of the Code and that standards and expectations of conduct were clearly defined.

The Committee noted that the Code paid particular attention to ensuring people were treated with respect, that bullying and harassment were clearly defined and that members must not behave in a manner that would bring the Council into disrepute.

Members expressed the view that they were happy to adopt the Code which was clear, robust and would give the Council power to impose sanctions if the sanctions were adopted and enacted into legislation.

Some members expressed the view that the Council needed to exercise caution if they were to impose sanctions as it could be abused if the political composition of the Council were to change and one party became dominant.

Members agreed that they supported the adoption of the Code and committee members should lead the way by adhering to the Code and showing respect to each other.

Resolved to recommend that Council approve the adoption of the new LGA Model Code of Conduct from the date of the Annual Council.

31/21 Committee of Standards in Public Life Recommendations - Update

The Group Head of Corporate Governance introduced the report and explained that the Council had complied with a number of the best practice recommendations and that any outstanding areas would be addressed as part of the Constitution review and the Councils change to a committee system governance model.

Members expressed the view that the update was excellent and would assure residents that they could have confidence in their elected members.

The Committee thank the Group Head of Corporate Governance for her work on the report.

Resolved to note the update on progress and actions taken.

32/21 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 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

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.

33/21 Update on complaints relating to the Code of Conduct

The Group Head of Corporate Governance introduced the report and asked the Committee to note the decisions taking by the Monitoring Officer in relation to the complaints detailed.

Members discussed the implications of adopting the new LGA Model Code of Conduct in particular what was acceptable behaviour in Council meetings, Members noted that a degree of moderate, provocative and emotional speeches were expected to be tolerated but that bullying and harassment was not.

Members queried if decisions taken by the Monitoring Officer could be appealed and noted that the Committee could ask her to re-open a case at this committee but not after as the matter would then be fully closed.

In response to members questions the Group Head of Corporate Governance confirmed that if a complaint was received about a member that member would be informed as soon as possible.

Members expressed concern that if a member of the Committee had been involved in a complaint they should not be able to preside over the consideration of that matter. The Group Head of Corporate Governance explained that if a panel were required to consider a complaint a balanced panel would be selected but that she would take on board members concerns in relation to complaints coming back before the Committee as a whole.

Resolved to note the decisions taken by the Monitoring Officer in relation to the complaints detailed in the report.