

**Minutes of the Standards Committee
2 December 2024**

Present:

G. Young (Chair)

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell

J.R. Boughtflower

M.J. Lee

C. Bateson

K.M. Grant

S.C. Mooney

Apologies: Councillors J.T.F. Doran and D.L. Geraci

27/24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

28/24 Minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee

The Committee noted the minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 October 2024.

The Interim Monitoring Officer sought guidance from the Committee on next steps following the hearing as the sanction recommended by the sub-committee had not been appropriately undertaken by the councillor. The Committee felt that this could also be considered a breach of the Member's Code of Conduct and should be investigated. The Committee also suggested the Council issue a correction in response to a recent BBC news article which incorrectly stated the councillor had issued an apology.

29/24 Minutes of Standards Sub-Committee 08 August 2024

It was proposed by Councillor Boughtflower and seconded by Councillor Mooney and **resolved** to exclude the public and press for discussion of this item as the report related to the minutes contains exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual.

The Committee noted the minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee held 8 August 2024.

The Interim Monitoring Officer sought guidance from the Committee on next steps as all avenues to resolve the complaint short of going to investigation had been exhausted. The Committee noted the recommendation of the sub-committee for the Monitoring Officer to instigate an investigation into the complaints if they were unresolved and suggested this proceed.

The Committee re-entered public session.

30/24 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors Attewell and Mooney advised they were also Surrey County Councillors.

31/24 Amendments to the Constitution

The Committee considered suggested amendments to the Council's Constitution.

The Interim Monitoring Officer advised that the suggested amendments related to the Terms of Reference and Delegations to Officers were minor and captured recommendations from Committees and changes to statutory guidance. The updated Contract Standing Orders took the incoming Procurement Act 2023 into consideration and reflect current legislation.

The Committee noted the proposed changes increased transparency in the Council's business.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend to Council the proposed changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1.

32/24 Member Development Strategy 2025-2027

The Committee considered a proposed Member Development Strategy for 2025-2027 and the reconstitution of the Member Development Steering Group.

The Senior Democratic Service Officer advised that following the councillor induction programme for the May 2023 elections, there was no further formal programme of development and the re-constitution of the Member Development Steering Group would provide members with a forum to guide further training.

The Committee requested further opportunities for training regarding the Member's Code of Conduct, Social Media, Safeguarding, and Violence against Women be raised with the group when they met. The Committee also suggested they receive regular reports on training at future meetings.

The Committee **resolved** to agree to:

- 1) Adopt the Member Development Strategy 2025-2027 and

- 2) Agree the reconstitution of the Member Development Steering Group as set out in the Terms of Reference.

33/24 Consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings

The Committee considered a response from the Interim Monitoring Officer to the government consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings. The Interim Monitoring Officer outlined the information sought as part of the consultation as well as the proposed responses and risks to consider.

The Committee acknowledged the benefits of holding meetings remotely in certain situations, however a balance would need to be sought for remote and in-person meetings and it may be best left to the local authority to decide the appropriate balance. The Committee also expressed that they felt some meetings, such as Planning Committee, would need to take place physically due to the regulatory nature of the meeting. Public participation in meetings, and how to handle confidential business would also need to be taken into consideration. The Committee also felt that physical presence in a meeting rather than remote presence provided reassurance for members of the public that they were being appropriately represented.

Committee members felt that the substitution scheme currently in place under the Constitution was more appropriate than proxy voting.

The Committee **resolved** to:

- 1) Note the report and
- 2) Agree the proposed response subject to the suggested amendments being incorporated by the Interim Monitoring Officer.

34/24 General Update on Standards Matters

The Committee received a general update on standards matters from the Interim Monitoring Officer. The Committee were also advised of forthcoming reports and updates to the Committee.

The Committee acknowledged this would be the Interim Monitoring Officer's last Standards Committee meeting, and thanked her for her dedication and hard work for the Council.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update.

Meeting ended 20:50