

**MEMBER CONDUCT COMMITTEE
21ST SEPTEMBER 2020**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Tassell)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Murphy)
Councillors Bentley, Draycott, Hadji-Nikolaou,
Rollings and Ward
Councillors Ellingworth (Parish Member) and
Jones (Parish Member)

Head of Strategic Support
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Ball (received just after the meeting)

The Chair stated that the meeting was being live streamed as a public meeting and would also be recorded and the recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2019 were confirmed as a true record.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTEREST

No disclosures were made.

3. QUESTIONS UNDER COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 12.8

No questions had been received.

4. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Considered a report of the Monitoring Officer providing an update on complaints received about breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct and any issues arising from those complaints (item 5 on the agenda).

The Monitoring Officer noted that there had been one complaint for which a Panel Hearing had been arranged, and of the six new complaints this year most were related to a single parish council. The parish council had recognised there were governance issues and were currently undergoing a review with LRALC.

RESOLVED that the current position in respect of complaints about breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct that have been received be noted.

Reason

To keep the Committee informed about complaints.

5. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Considered a report of the Monitoring Officer providing an update regarding the Register of Members' Interests (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Deputy Monitoring Officer noted that the response rate for borough councillors had remained consistent with the previous year. The Monitoring officer stated that there was no legal obligation for councillors to update their Register of Members' Interests on a six-monthly basis; this was instigated by the Borough Council.

Members discussed the recent consultation by the Local Government Association (LGA) regarding a draft model Code of Conduct and it was noted that the consultation had closed on 17th August 2020 with a final draft anticipated to become available in Autumn 2020. Once the draft model Code of Conduct had been finalised it would be considered by the Committee for adoption. This consultation did not affect sanctions for breaches of the Code of Conduct as these were regulated by the Localism Act 2011.

Sanctions for breaches of the Code of Conduct had been reviewed as part of an earlier consultation by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL). The Government had not yet responded to the recommendations made by CSPL.

RESOLVED

1. that the processes for keeping the Register of Members' Interest up to date be noted;
2. that a further update of the Register of Members' Interests and the processes for ensuring it is kept up to date is not scheduled for a future meeting of the Committee unless the response rate drops significantly and requires the Committee's consideration.

Reasons

1. Under the Localism Act 2011 (sections 29 and 30), the relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interest) Regulations 2012 and the Council's Code of Conduct, Members of the Council are required to disclose their own and partners disclosable pecuniary interests, and other interest.
2. The Committee considered that the consistency of response over several years by borough councillors indicated that further reviews were not required unless the response rate dropped significantly. If this occurred an update would be scheduled to a future meeting for the Committee's review.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

Considered a report of the Monitoring Officer enabling the Committee to agree a work programme to plan its future business (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

It was noted that the update for the Register of Members' Interests would be amended in the Work Programme to reflect the Committee's request that it only be submitted for the Committee's consideration if the response rate was to drop significantly.

RESOLVED that the Committee's current work programme be noted and updated in accordance with the decisions taken during the consideration of this item and other items on the agenda.

Reason

To enable the Committee to fulfil its role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillor and co-opted members.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next ordinary Council meeting on 9th November 2020 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Member Conduct Committee.