



Minutes of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2022 at 6.30 pm

- Present:** Councillor Gilbert (Chair)  
Councillors Crooks, Hume, McPake (Vice-Chair), Raja and Wallis (Vice-Chair) and Parish Councillors Fisher and Winsor
- Officers:** S Bridglalsingh (Director - Law and Governance), P Brown (Head of Democratic Services), C Stephens (Head of Legal), E Scott (Solicitor) and R Tidman (Committee Services Manager)
- Apology:** Councillors Hussain and Verma

**ST17 MINUTES**

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 14 October 2021 and the meeting of the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee held on 29 November 2021, be approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

**ST18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None disclosed.

**ST19 ANNUAL / PERIODIC REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the annual / periodic report of the Standards Committee.

The Director - Law and Governance summarised the report noting the work of the Standards Committee over the last year had included the recruitment and appointment of Parish and Town Council representatives, the review of Social Media Guidance and the review of the LGA Code of Conduct.

It was noted there had been a reduction in the number of complaints received over the last year and that the complaints had been dealt with quicker than previous years thanks to a dedicated legal resource for Standards work.

Standards training for all new councillors had formed part of the induction programme and committee members had also received scenario based training.

The Committee noted that it would be useful to have a record of the statements of understanding that were discussed at the September workshop and requested that a summary of the clarifications issued were added to the action log.

It was further noted that there would be updated Standards training for new councillors which would include the Social Media Guidance and it was requested that training be included to address any issues for those councillors who also had a parish council role.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2021/22 be noted and referred to Council for receipt.
2. That the Director - Law and Governance make arrangements to add the provided case studies to the action log from the Committee's September workshop.

**ST20**

#### **DISPENSATIONS - MILTON KEYNES DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP**

The Committee considered the report on dispensations for the Milton Keynes Development Partnership.

The Head of Democratic Services summarised the report highlighting that the proposed dispensation would be granted in specific circumstances to those Councillors who were appointed to the Board of Milton Keynes Development Partnership.

It was noted that this dispensation would give certainty and clarity to those Councillors who were board members. To ensure that dispensations were monitored going forward it was proposed that a running log of the dispensations that had been granted and the delegation to the Monitoring Officer would form part of the agenda for the Standards Planning Group to keep under review.

RESOLVED -

1. That dispensations be granted under Section 31(4) of the Localism Act 2011 on the basis that the Committee considers that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area.
2. That the dispensations be made in respect of:
  - (a) where there is any contract between the Council and MKDP; and
  - (b) where MKDP is the Council's tenant (corporate tenancies).

3. That the dispensations to be made in respect of Councillors appointed to the Board of Milton Keynes Development Partnership take effect from 24 March 2022 for a period of four years.
3. That records of dispensations or delegations to grant dispensations, including their expiry date be shown in all future Planning Group agendas.

**ST21**

### **LGA MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Committee considered the report on the LGA Model Code of Conduct

The Director - Law and Governance introduced the report noting that the existing Code of Conduct was adopted in 2012 and therefore adopting a new Code of Conduct was a significant decision for the Committee to make.

The Code was based on the Nolan principles and would provide a consistent approach across all levels of local government if town and parish councils in Milton Keynes also chose to adopt it.

The Committee were provided with a late paper which set out the Government's response to the recommendations from the Committee for Standards in Public Life. The response from the Government reinforced its commitment to high ethical standards in local government and also reinforced its support to local authorities to uphold these standards.

There was consensus by the Committee to adopt the LGA Model Code and it was agreed that:

- the monetary threshold for the registration of gift and hospitality be set at £50 and over;
- the Code of Conduct would not apply to co-opted members of Council Committees that were not entitled to vote;
- under the obligation of respect, the Model Code be amended to read:
- *If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online, **inform** the local authority **and** the relevant social media provider and / or **if appropriate** make **a report** to the police.*

- an annual review of the Code of Conduct be carried out, annually, or to coincide with any review undertaken by the Local Government Association.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Model Code be recommended to Full Council for adoption with the following amendments:
  - (a) under the obligation of respect, the Model code be amended to read:

*If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online, **inform** the local authority **and** the relevant social media provider and / or **if appropriate** make **a report** to the police.*
2. That an annual review of the Code of Conduct be carried out, annually, or to coincide with any review undertaken by the Local Government Association.
3. That a training session be readily available and accessible for all Councillors and Parishes further to a decision by Full Council to adopt a new Code.

**ST22**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Standards Committee was scheduled for Wednesday 20 July 2022 at 6.30 pm.

**ST23**

**COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The Committee thanked the Chair, Councillor Gilbert, who would not be seeking re-election in May 2022, for his work and the progress the Committee had been able to make this year.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 7.53 PM