

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 11 April 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.30 am

18 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 14 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

19 Apologies

Apologies received from Cllr Tim Dumper.

20 Declarations of interest

None.

21 Public speaking

No members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

22 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

23 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential/exempt items at the meeting.

24 Member/Officer protocol

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report setting out details of a redrafted Member/Officer Relations Protocol.

The committee noted that following recommendations from External Auditors and feedback from the Peer Challenge team and the Centre for Public Scrutiny, the opportunity has been taken to redraft the Protocol to ensure that it complies with best practice and is up-to-date.

The Protocol explained the roles of Members and Officers and sets out how they should work together and if any issues arise, to whom those issues should be reported.

The committee were advised that the Protocol had also been reviewed by the Constitution Working Group and their comments had been incorporated in the document.

Members of the committee made the following comments:

- important that all members receive training on the protocol from the Monitoring Officer

- useful to understand the wording of the current protocol to enable a comparison of the changes set out in the existing document
- comments from Standards Committee to be submitted to the Constitution Working Group for consideration and resubmission to committee
- to request that the Constitution Working Group invite an Independent Representative from the committee to assist in their work reviewing the constitution

In light of discussions members of committee are asked to reflect on the document and send any further comments to the Democratic Services Manager for referral to the Constitution Working Group.

The Chair proposed the recommendations which were unanimously carried.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the comments raised by the Standards Committee on the member/officer protocol to the Constitution Working Group to review the document and to request the CWG to resubmit to the Standards Committee
2. That any further comments on the Member/Officer protocol are submitted to the Democratic Services Manager within 7 working days.
3. That the Monitoring Officer is invited to provide training to all Members on the Protocol once adopted.

25 **Code of Conduct complaints update**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report updating the Committee in relation to Code of Conduct complaints received and progress made since the last meeting in November 2023 together with an updated complaint form.

The committee made the following comments:

- reasons for delays should be included in the timetable
- report contains a number of cases from 2022
- Next steps – process already started further details to be included in the next update
- charts welcomed – needs some tweaking, setting out different outcomes in future reports
- Sanction – subject member refusing to take the proposed action useful to understand the reason for the refusal
- sanctions training to reflect that training has been completed
- important to manage the expectations of complainants

The Chair proposed the recommendation which was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That the Standards Committee note the update and support the updated Code of Conduct complaint form.

26 **Work Programme update**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the work programme for the Standards Committee for 2023/2024 and were invited to consider any items to be included for the 2024/2025 work programme.

The committee noted the work programme for 2023/2024, including:

- general update on matters affecting Standards (good practice, etc)
- Work programme to include information circulated relating to the work of standards committee and including government updates and good practice
- Training for 2024 – Code of Conduct should we be more proactive in offering training for parish and towns?
- programme for 2024/2025.

RESOLVED: That the Standards Committee note the Standards Committee work programme for 2024/2025.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

E Rylance (Chair)
J Bailey
I Chubb
S Hughes
J Loudoun

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

Officers in attendance:

Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager
Katie Webb, Lawyer

Councillor apologies:

T Dumper

Chairman

Date: