

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at the Remote - Virtual Meeting on 1 September 2020 at 6.00 pm.

Present: Councillors N. D. Harrison (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Lodge (Co-Opted Member), C. M. Neame, R. Michalowski, D. Powell (Co-Opted Member) and M. A. Brunt (Substitute).

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from the Chairman, Councillor Rickman, with Councillor Brunt in attendance as substitute. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Harrison, chaired the meeting.

7. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 June 2020 were confirmed.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9. ANNUAL STANDARDS REPORT

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which summarised the discharge of the Standards function during 2019/20, including:

- The Member Code of Conduct
- Complaints against Members
- The role of the Monitoring Officer
- Maintenance of the Register of Interests

Members acknowledged that since the receipt of the last Annual Report in 2018, a new Monitoring Officer had been appointed. Good progress had been made by the Governance Task Group in delivering a refreshed Member Code of Conduct and Member Officer Protocol, and training on the Member Code of Conduct had been delivered to all Members after the local elections in 2019.

The Committee in 2018 had expressed that it was desirable to improve the transparency of those complaints which were not brought to the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer acknowledged that resources had been focussed on updating the Code of Conduct, and subsequently, resources had been shifted to the COVID-19 response. Members were assured that a review of the process for Member complaints was timely.

Members noted that a review to ensure there was no overlap or confusion between the distinct remits of the Standards Committee and the Governance Task Group was necessary. Members urged that the operation of the Code of Conduct, and associated matters, should remain with the Standards Committee.

Members welcomed that the Monitoring Officer had consulted with the Chair of the Committee throughout the year. However, it was felt that the update meetings with Group Leaders should be scheduled as a minimum twice per year, by the Monitoring Officer.

In response to a question about recent complaints, the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer would work with the Standards Committee and its Chair to implement learning points and bring forward an updated protocol to provide increased clarity and transparency to the process. Members agreed and emphasised that where any Assessment Panels or Sub-Committee meetings had taken place, a summary of those meetings should be presented to the Committee. The Committee should also be timetabled in the annual calendar of meetings to meet more than once per year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Standards Report 2019/20 be noted.

10. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)

There was none.

The Meeting closed at 6.25 pm