

# Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Tuesday, 7 November 2023 at 7.30 pm.**

**Present:** Councillors P. Harp (Chair); J. C. S. Essex (Vice-Chair), J. Dwight, J. Hudson, S. A. Kulka and C. Hughes (Co-Opted Member)

**Attended remotely:** Councillors Lodge (Co-Opted Member)



## **12 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence. All members of the Committee were present.

## **13 Minutes of the previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 11 July 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **14 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **15 Annual Member Complaints 2022-23**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the item. It was explained that the Localism Act 2011 placed a duty on Councils to have local processes for regulating the conduct of Members. Additionally, to promote and maintain high standards of Member conduct. The purpose of the report was to learn from Member complaints, identifying any themes and trends. The Committee was reminded that individual Members subject to complaints could not be identified.

Ten complaints about Members had been investigated during the 2022-23 Municipal year. This was an increase with an average of five Member complaints investigated annually. Of the ten, three were made by officers and remainder by members of public. Two related to the handling of personal data, four to the conduct of Members at formal Committee meetings and three alleged offensive and racist comments on social media. The complaints made had been addressed using the Member Code of Conduct and the protocol on Member Officer Relations. It was highlighted that a review of the Member Code of Conduct was ongoing with training on the resulting amended Code anticipated and the possible need to refresh the Register of Interest.

## **Standards Committee, Tuesday, 7th November, 2023**

The Committee discussed the officer's report, with it being agreed that:

- It be recommended to Group Leaders that guidance on the use of devices by Members at Committee meetings to access agenda, reports, background papers etc be updated to reflect the move to personal choice; and, instead focussing the guidance on the appropriate use of those devices during meetings and silencing of mobile phones.
- Given the increase in the number of Member complaints investigated, work continue to embed Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion training as a mandatory element of Member induction programme and that this explicitly include consideration of Member conduct on social media.
- Consideration be given to reporting on the implementation of remedies and any other follow-up actions as part of the complaints process when it is revised after the Code of Conduct review.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer committed to verify with the Communication Team that the remedy of one-to-one training on the use of social media with one Member had been achieved.

**RESOVLED** that the contents of the report be noted.

### **16 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting finished at 7.54 pm