

Standards Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 29 March 2022
at 10.30am

Present:

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris (in the Chair)	Cllr Mike Sands
Cllr Claire Bowes	Cllr Kay Mason Billig
Cllr Dan Roper	Cllr Nigel Dixon
	Cllr Tony White

Independent Members Present:

Ms Christine MacDonald
Ms Tracy Colman

Also in Attendance:

Helen Edwards - Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

1. Apologies

1.1 There were no apologies given.

2. Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no interests declared.

4. Urgent Business

4.1 There was no urgent business to consider.

5. Performance and Monitoring Report

5.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer updating it on matters of standards and conduct since the last meeting.

5.2 In introducing the report, the Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- The report covered the period from 1 January 2021 to 21 March 2022.
- There had been five complaints received during the period, from members of the public. All had been considered by the Monitoring Officer

and no actions had been deemed necessary.

- 5.3 The Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to **note** the Council's performance in relation to Member standards and conduct during the period 1 January 2021 to 21 March 2022.

6. Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct – Training Pack

- 6.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer which updated them on the LGA training pack and how to incorporate this into training for Norfolk County Council members.
- 6.2 The Committee suggested that it could be useful for Members of the Committee to engage in a training project and were used to trial any training that was potentially being offered.
- 6.3 The Committee suggested that the training needed to be proportionate to what was needed. It was ideal to use the material but needed some condensing and pruning to make it more digestible so members can absorb it more effectively and to make sure it is understood and abided by. Scenarios were suggested and could be a useful tool.
- 6.4 The Committee asked that if an online package was possible, advance notice to the Committee could provide them with a chance to trial it.
- 6.5 The Committee agreed to have a full package of training available for the elections in 2025, but also a small refresher training package ready sooner. The Monitoring Officer agreed to present the refresher package at a subsequent meeting.
- 6.6 The Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to **note** the LGA Model Code of Conduct Training Pack and consider how members wish to incorporate that into training for Norfolk Members, and also whether training should also be opened to any Norfolk councillors including District councillors.

7. Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020

- 7.1 The Committee received the report by the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer which assisted Members of the Standards Committee to consider and understand the government's position in relation to ethical standards.
- 7.2 The Committee reviewed the recommendations in turn and the following points were noted;
- 7.2.1 Recommendation 2
It was expected that more information would be provided from the LGA consulting on disclosing home addresses on public information record, such as ballot papers.

- 7.2.2 The Committee acknowledged that there had to be a balance regarding disclosing addresses. It was helpful for residents to know that candidates lived in the area they wanted to represent.
- 7.2.3 Members felt it could be dangerous for it to become the norm not to publicise addresses on the register of interest forms as it would negate transparency.
- 7.3 Recommendation 6
It was important to think of the gifts from the view of the public and the Committee agreed that the code of conduct should include a limit of £100 cumulatively but not made up of gifts over £50.
- 7.4 Recommendations 10,12, 13,14,16
The government was rejecting these recommendations. Members of the Committee felt that Standards Hearings needed to have more power in the sanctions that they could give. The current sanctions were not enough to deter Councillor from overstepping the mark. It was also important to be able to offer Councillors a right of appeal. There was also the question of Independent Person having a vote and some Members felt that they should be given this right. There would be further consultation on these recommendations, and this would be brought back to the Committee.
- 7.5 Recommendation 17
It was suggested that recommendation 17 should be included in amongst the other sanction relation recommendations.
- 7.6 The Committee considered the government's response and determined the actions that they wish the Monitoring Officer to take, if any.

The meeting finished at 11.25am

Mark Kiddle-Morris
Chair