

## **Standards Committee**

**22 June 2017**

Present: Councillor C Johnson (Chair)  
Councillors B Burdis, E N Darke, P Earley, Janet Hunter,  
P Mason, B Pickard and M Rankin.

### **SC01/06/17 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor F Lott. Also Mr G Clark (Independent Person) and Mrs S Gardner (Independent Person).

### **SC02/06/17 Appointment of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members reported.

### **SC03/06/17 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

### **SC04/06/17 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 March 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **SC05/06/17 Action Plan and Work Programme 2017/18**

A report was received from the Head of Law and Governance which introduced the proposed Action Plan/Work Programme of the Standards Committee up to 31 March 2018.

The Standards Committee was responsible for the Authority's statutory duty for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected Members and co-opted Members of the Council.

Members were requested to consider the proposed tasks and matters that would be undertaken by the Committee as set out in the report and to determine the Action Plan/Work Programme for 2017/18.

The Committee met informally in February 2017 to discuss the work programme and its development for this municipal year. In addition, the Chair and former Deputy Chair, along with the Independent Persons also attended a regional standards committee development session/event hosted by the Authority. At that session/event delegates also considered and identified areas and topics where further development and training was necessary for Members across the region. The suggestions/development requests received had been fed into the draft of the work programme. The Committee noted that the use of social media was a recurring theme and had therefore been directly addressed in the proposed

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work programme. The actions arising in the use of social media was dealt with in a separate report on the agenda.

The Action Plan/Work Programme would be monitored by the Committee at each meeting and the progress of the identified actions would be reported in the Committee's Annual Report at the end of the municipal year in May 2018.

The Head of Law and Governance made reference to a pocket guide which had been developed to assist Members in how the Code of Conduct applied to them. A copy of the pocket guide which was provided at the meeting would be circulated to all Members.

**Resolved** that the Standards Committee Action Plan/Work Programme for the 2017/18 Municipal Year be approved.

### **SC06/06/17 Regional Meeting of Standards Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs and Independent Persons**

The Committee was advised that a number of key themes and issues had arisen from the recent Regional meeting of Standards Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs and Independent Persons attended by the Chair and former Deputy Chair, and, as the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was not due to be held until the 31 August 2017, it was important that this report be brought to the Standards Committee as quickly as possible.

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report on the Regional Meeting of the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standards Committees and Independent Persons hosted by North Tyneside on 3 April 2017.

The event was well attended with nearly 30 delegates from 10 authorities. The purpose of the event was to allow the sharing of knowledge and experience developed since the inception of the new Standards regime in 2012. The session was very informal with most of the work being undertaken in small groups followed by feed back to the wider group.

The group discussions enabled the identification of key themes and issues which had then been used to form the basis of an action list for use by the Monitoring Officers to formulate appropriate responses and actions, with the potential for regional activities. The identified actions points were set out at Appendix 1.

The action points included in particular a request from delegates for further development and training in relation to the use of social media. In order to progress this request as soon as possible enquiries of a training provider on this topic had been sought and secured and a proposed training specification had been received as set out at Appendix 2. The training specification had been shared with other Monitoring Officers to seek expressions of interest. It was anticipated that the training proposed would be delivered at a regional level as soon as possible with the costs associated with the training divided between participating Authorities.

The Monitoring Officers would meet in June/July 2017 (an earlier meeting had to be postponed) to further consider the action points and to formulate responses accordingly. Further details of the responses proposed to the action points would be provided to Members in due course.

**Resolved** that the report and the action points identified; and the proposed Social Media training specification be noted.

**SC07/06/17 Change of Meeting Commencement Time**

The Standards Committee considered the commencement time of its meetings for the remainder of the 2017/18 Municipal Year in the light of those Members who had daytime work commitments.

**Resolved** that the Standards Committee meetings held on 31 August 2017, 30 November 2017 and 1 March 2018 commence at 6.00 pm.