

ETHICS & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

3RD SEPTEMBER, 2024

PRESENT: MR R. ALEXANDER (CHAIR)

Mr S. Williams

Mr R. Lynch

Jenny White

Sarah Manuel

Town Councillor J. Rawcliffe

Councillor M. Cross

Councillor L. Winnett

WITH: Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
(Monitoring Officer)
Data Protection & Governance Officer

1. **SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION**

No requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.

2. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was reported for Councillor J. Thomas.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

4. **ETHICS & STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 21ST SEPTEMBER, 2023**

The decisions of the Ethics & Standards Committee held on the 13th March, 2024 were submitted.

The Committee AGREED that the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

Matters Arising

The recommendations arising from the Group Leader Discussion were referred to, and the following update was provided:

PDR Process

Following discussions with the Head of Democratic Services, the Monitoring Officer reported that participation in the voluntary PDR process had been encouraging. Opportunity had been offered to Members not engaging to have discussions with those Members who had participated in the process. Feedback from the process was positive with 100% of Members finding it beneficial. Participation levels in the next round of PDR's would be monitored.

Implementation of an introductory statement at the start of Council meetings

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this had not been implemented to date. Discussions had taken place with the Leader, the Head of Democratic Services, and former Interim Chief Executive, who had expressed concern that an introductory statement might give the impression that the Council has conduct issues when it does not. However, the matter would be discussed further with the new Joint Chief Executive, and Group Leaders.

5. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBER TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee welcomed Sarah Manuel to her first meeting of the Ethics & Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that Sarah had completed training, and her appointment to the Ethics & Standards Committee had been ratified by Council in July.

6. UPDATE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER

The complaint outstanding with the Ombudsman and now been concluded, and the complaint would not be progressing any further. There were no outstanding investigations or complaints with the Ombudsman in respect of any Councillors.

The Monitoring Officer said Members would recall an issue that had arisen with the Ombudsman office earlier in the year. An updated email had been received confirming that an investigator had resigned after making political comments on social media. As the result the Ombudsman has instructed an independent review of those cases dealt with by the investigator, the outcome of which was expected in the Autumn. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that key stakeholders, including Standards Committee Chairs would be briefed and receive an embargoed copy of the report prior to publication.
