

Protocol for Meetings between Senior Officers and Chief Whips

Introduction

The Committee on Standards in Public Life, in addition to publishing its report on local authority ethical standards, published a list of Best Practice Recommendations. Best Practice Recommendation 15 states that senior officers should meet regularly with political group leaders and group whips to discuss standards issues. One of the outcomes of the Member Engagement Sessions was that a Protocol for these meetings should be drafted.

The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Officers and Members of the Council when meeting to discuss Standards Issues. The Council has adopted a Protocol for Member/Employee Relations and it is expected that the respective parties conduct themselves in accordance with this Protocol when attending these meetings, as well as adhering to their own Codes of Conduct.

Meetings

Attendees

Chair: Monitoring Officer

Chief Whip(s)

Leader(s) of Political Groups

Chair of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

Deputy Monitoring Officer(s)

Chief Executive of the Council

Section 151 Officer

Frequency

Meetings will take place on a quarterly basis, or more frequently if required by the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Whip(s), Leader(s) of Political Groups.

Agenda

An agenda will be agreed between the Monitoring Officer and the Chair of the Ethical Standards Committee. The agenda will be circulated three working days before the meeting, together with any relevant documentation. Meetings will be confidential.

Terms of Reference

The purpose of the meetings is to discuss common issues that have arisen as a result of standards matters and strategies to deal with these. This will assist the political parties in the resolution of matters and locally and deal with common issues that affect members generally. **These meetings will not discuss individual matters or the statutory functions of the Monitoring Officer and the way that he manages the arrangements.** Area for discussion may include:

- Common or reoccurring Code of Conduct complaint themes
- Identifying trends
- Discussions about particular difficulties encountered with progressing complaints
- Statistical data
- Exploring outcomes available for complaints
- Promoting the Duty to Promote and Maintain High Standards

Confidentiality

All discussions at these meetings will remain confidential and the parties agree that they will not be shared with any third parties.