

Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

8 September 2017

Case Summary

1. Summary Statement

- 1.1 Within its terms of reference, the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee has a duty to promote high ethical standards amongst Members. As well as complying with legislation and guidance, the Committee will need to demonstrate learning from issues arising from local investigations and case law. Furthermore it is advisable for the Committee to be kept informed of any particularly notable cases which are publicised as they may also add to learning at the local level.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report and the cases at Appendix 1 and to consider any issues for the Council.

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3. Strategic Resource Implications

3.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

4. Legal and Statutory Implications

4.1 By considering national cases of significance the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee will be better informed and placed to discharge its duty to promote high ethical standards.

5. Implications for the Council's Scorecard Priorities

5.1 High standards of conduct are an essential part of good corporate governance and this in turn has a direct relationship with the delivery of high quality services.

6. Background Details

6.1 As well as complying with legislation and guidance, the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee will need to demonstrate learning from issues arising from local investigations and case law. Further, it would be advisable for the Standards Committee to be kept informed of any particularly notable case law which is publicised as this may also add to learning at the local level. Compliance with the law, decided cases, guidance and good practice will increase the effectiveness of the ethical framework within the authority and minimise the risk of challenge.

Councillor suspended over Grenfell ‘hanging’ tweet

A Solihull councillor has been suspended from his cabinet position after an offensive tweet about Grenfell Tower protesters.

The Council said an investigation would take place after a complaint had been received.

The tweet, replying to an image of Kensington Town Hall protesters posted by a journalist, read: "Lets get ourselves a hangin!"

The tweet came after protests were held as residents demanded support for those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire. The tweet was subsequently deleted and the councillor apologised “unreservedly”.

BBC News, June 2017

Councillor sent texts saying she could use position to “shut up” fraud investigators

A Wirral Councillor who sent texts stating that she could use her position to “shut up” an investigation into alleged fraud has been found to have breached numerous council conduct codes.

The Labour councillor was the subject of an audit investigation by Wirral Council in 2015 regarding a charity she co-chaired.

A report has found her to be in breach of the council’s code of conduct on four counts relating to her behaviour during and around the time of that investigation.

The breaches include “cavalier” comments made on social media, references to confidential matters in the press and her conduct during the latest investigation.

It adds that the councillor “seems quite willing to use her position as councillor to her own benefit when it suits her.”

The report is heavily critical of the councillor's use of social media in general and states she "frequently posted in her public and private capacity and she did not appear to give much consideration to her own view (and that of the council code) that people may not easily distinguish between her actions as a public figure and her actions in a private capacity."

"Her tendency to be cavalier about whether she is acting in a public or private capacity means that she sails dangerously close to the wind at times."

In total, the standards investigation has found the councillor to have breached the council's code of conduct on four occasions - for failing to treat people with respect and for conduct which was contrary to the council's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

Liverpool Echo, July 2017

Councillor suspended after 'calling gay pride marchers paedophiles'

A north London Labour councillor has been suspended after allegedly posting tweets which criticised gay pride marchers. She accused the marchers of "paedophilia" and defended her tweets when challenged by LGBT activists. She had previously also posted alleged homophobic content on her facebook account.

The councillor has been suspended pending investigation and has since resigned from her political party.

Evening Standard and This Is Local London, July/August 2017