

# Minutes of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

**29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 3.00pm**

- Present:** Councillor Ahmed (Vice Chair);  
Councillors Dhallu, Hevican, P Hughes and Simms.
- Observers:** Mr John Tew and Mr Richard Phillips (Independent Persons).
- Officers:** Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer; Elaine Newsome – Service Manager – Democracy; Trisha Newton – Senior Democratic Services Officer.

16/20 **Minute Silence**

The Committee observed a minute silence to mark the passing of the Chair, Councillor Geoff Lewis.

Geoff Lewis had been on the Council for 29 years and had been the Chair of Standards Committee since 2013.

17/20 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Akhter.

18/20 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.



**19/20      Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared at the meeting.

**20/20      Matter of Urgency**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

**21/20      Independent Person**

The Vice Chair welcomed Mr Richard Phillips, Independent Person, to his first meeting of the Committee.

**22/20      LGA Member Code of Conduct Review**

Further to Minute No. 11/20 (6<sup>th</sup> March 2020), the Local Government Association (LGA) had commenced work on revising the model code in September 2019 with an anticipated introduction of the new code at the LGA conference on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. This consultation was halted due to the developing Covid-19 situation and has now recommenced with the consultation running from 9<sup>th</sup> June to 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

The draft code of conduct forms part of a broader programme of work around civility in public life that aims to address concerns about intimidation of those holding public office and the standards of public and political debate.

Elected Members and Officers had been involved in initial discussions on the content of the code. The Council's Monitoring Officer had been invited by the LGA to participate in progressing this element of the LGA's programme and this was approved by the Committee at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

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Consultation on the draft Code had now recommenced with a number of avenues offered to local authorities to aid in forming a view. The LGA has developed an online questionnaire and had also offered a series of webinars during July and August and a dedicated email address for any enquiries on the code or consultation process.

The outcome of the national review will influence the Council's own review of its governance arrangements.

It was proposed to launch an internal consultation with Elected Members and they could also provide feedback direct to the LGA.

Arrangements would be made for a meeting of the Standards Working Group to consider the draft Code and to submit recommendations to the Committee prior to the response date of 17 August.

Once the consultation had concluded, the LGA would publish the final Code in September. It was therefore proposed to complete the review of the Council's Code of Conduct and Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations once the model Code was available and arrangements would be made for meetings of the Standards Working Group to take place in the Autumn to undertake the review.

The membership of the Standards Working Group was confirmed and the Vice Chair would liaise with the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer with regard to the addition of a further meeting to the Group, in the absence of the Chair.

**Agreed that:-**

- (1) the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Vice-Chair of the Committee, be authorised to undertake a consultation exercise with Elected Members and develop the Council's response to the consultation on the LGA Model Code of Conduct;

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- (2) a further report, outlining the recommendations of the Standards Working Group, be submitted to the Committee prior to the close of the LGA consultation.

Meeting ended at 3.52pm.