

Minutes of Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

**Tuesday, 4 July 2023 at 5.30 pm
at Committee Room 1 - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Allcock (Chair)
Councillors Kaur (Vice- Chair), J Giles, Hemingway, Muflihi, and
Rahman.

Officers: Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance – Monitoring
Officer), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Law and
Governance), Ruth Darby (Senior Civic and Member Services
Officer) and Toby Howes (Interim Democratic Services Officer).

16/21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Crompton
and Trumpeter and Mr Richard Phillips (Independent Person).

17/21 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

18/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2023 were
agreed as a correct record.



19/21 Urgent Item of Business

There were no additional items of business to consider.

20/21 Appointments to Ethical Standards Sub-Committees and Ethical Standards Working Group

The Committee noted that under The Localism Act 2011, authorities are required to adopt arrangements for dealing with complaints about breaches of the Member Code of Conduct. The Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints provided for a Sub-Committee of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee to consider investigation reports referred to it by the Monitoring Officer and to conduct hearings (including the imposition of sanctions).

The Committee considered appointments and the Terms of Reference to the two Ethical Standards Sub-Committees for the 2023/24 municipal year. In addition, it considered appointments to the Ethical Standards Working Group and the Working Group's Terms of Reference for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the membership of the two Ethical Standards Sub-Committees for the 2023/24 municipal year, with flexibility between membership to cater for availability and workload, with delegated powers to carry out the functions set out in the following Terms of Reference, be approved as set out in the table below:-

Terms of Reference of the Ethical Standards Sub Committee

- To consider investigation reports referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.
- To conduct hearings (including the imposition of sanctions).

Membership of the Ethical Standards Sub Committees

SUB-COMMITTEE 1		SUB-COMMITTEE 2	
Member	Substitute	Member	Substitute
Allcock	Substitute members taken from remainder of committee	Allcock	Substitute members taken from remainder of committee
Kaur		Crompton	
J Giles		Hemingway	
Muflihi		Rahman	
Trumpeter (or sub)		Trumpeter (or sub)	
+ Independent Person		+ Independent Person	

- (2) that the Terms of Reference for the Ethical Standards Working Group as set out in the appendix of the report be approved and that the Chair and Vice-Chair, be appointed to the Ethical Standards Working Group, with 3 additional Members to be confirmed.

21/21 Member Development Programme

Members were presented with the first update on the Member Development Programme since the Committee had approved it at the last meeting. Positive feedback from councillors had been received and there was enthusiasm for the topics listed on the programme. The programme was a live document responding to councillors' needs and the wider local government regulations.

Any training clashes in the programme would be addressed and Members noted the other additional resources that they could access, such as those available from the Local Government Association.

Training records could be made available to each councillor and a comprehensive induction programme was in place for new councillors. There had been positive feedback from new councillors on the induction programme.

In response to a question from the Members, it was noted that the development of a Members Training Portal was in progress.

Members welcomed the training provided by the Member Development Programme.

22/21 Complaints Update

Members considered the Complaints Update and were referred to the table in the report detailing the nature of complaints received and to assess any particular trends or patterns.

In response to questions from Members, the Committee was informed that the complaints received was around the number to be expected, whilst the nature of the complaints did not give rise to any specific concerns.

23/21 Gifts and Hospitality Register

Two new entries had been made to the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

24/21 Work Programme

The Committee was presented with the draft work programme for 2023/24.

It was noted that in respect of personal safety for Members, a wide encompassing approach of all areas of this would be taken and this would also include councillor surgeries which was to be reviewed. Members suggested that this item also address situations where councillors faced confrontational issues. The Committee heard that this would include areas such as room layout of meetings and risk assessments for councillor surgeries will be re-circulated.

There would also be a deep dive review of the Code of Conduct and it was agreed to the Committee's suggestion that this would also be an opportune moment to consider setting up a working group to promote high standards of conduct.

Work with the Communications Team and the Local Government Association was also taking place with regards to volume of casework and balancing work with the role of a councillor.

The Chair welcomed any further suggestions to be added to the Work Programme.

Resolved:-

That the Work programme for 2023/24 be approved and kept under review during the year by the Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

Meeting ended at 6.10 pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk