

Minutes of Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

**Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 3:00pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Allcock (Chair)
Councillors Crompton and W Gill.

Officers: Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer), Elaine Newsome (Service Manger – Democracy), Vanessa Mahersmith (Governance and Business Support Principal Lead & Solicitor), Rebecca Jenkins (Senior Lead – Service Improvement), Trisha Newton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager) and John Swann (Democratic Services Officer).

1/23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors E M Giles and Lewis and Mr Richard Phillips (Independent Person).

2/23 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3/23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

4/23 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

5/23 **DBS Checks for Elected Members**

Further to Minute No. 41/22 (1 November 2022), the Committee considered the Protocol for DBS Checks for Elected Members.

The Protocol set out that Basic DBS Checks would be required by all members with enhanced checks for those members in selected roles.

It was proposed that DBS checks would be undertaken every 12 months or where a member was appointed to one of the roles identified as requiring an enhanced check.

With regard to capturing further information around contact members had with children and vulnerable adults, a review would be undertaken in six months' time and officers would investigate ways to capture the data.

Resolved to recommend to Council that the DBS Check Protocol for Elected Members, as set out in Appendix A, which includes:-

- (i) annual Basic DBS Checks to be undertaken for all elected members not identified in the roles set out in (2) below;
- (ii) annual Enhanced DBS Checks to be undertaken for those elected members in the roles set out below:-
 - The Leader
 - Deputy Leader
 - Cabinet Members for Children and Adults

- All Members of Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board and Health and Adults Social Care Scrutiny Board
- Members of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Any other Member who may regularly come into contact with children or vulnerable adults as part of their Council role.

be approved with effect from the commencement of the 2023 municipal year.

6/23 **Member – Officer Relationship Insight**

As part of the Council’s Improvement Plan, work had been taking place focusing on the health of the officer/member relationship.

External reviews by Grant Thornton and the LGA had found that the relationship between members and officers had become much improved.

A regular survey to members and officers was planned to ensure changes were embedded and the improvement of the relationship continued.

7/23 **Committee on Standards in Public Life**

The Committee received the Committee on Standards in Public Life ‘Leading in Practice’ report, published in January 2023.

The Committee also reviewed the Best Practice recommendations as set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and noted the Council’s current position.

8/23 **Annual Report of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee 2022/23**

The Committee was required to produce an annual report detailing the activities undertaken throughout the municipal year. The annual report would be referred to Full Council for consideration at its next meeting on 28 March 2023.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair wished to place on record the Committee's thanks to John Tew who had resigned as Independent Person.

Resolved that the Annual Report of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee 2022/23 be submitted to the next meeting of Full Council.

9/23 **Annual Review of the Members' Code of Conduct and Arrangements for dealing with Complaints under the Code of Conduct**

The Committee considered the Annual review of the Members' Code of Conduct and Arrangements for dealing with Complaints under the Code of Conduct.

A desktop review had been completed and no amendments had been identified.

A thorough review of the Members' Code of Conduct and Arrangements for dealing with Complaints under the Code of Conduct was planned for 2024.

10/23 **Annual Review of Members' Registers of Interest**

The Committee considered the annual review of the Register of Members' Interests.

11/23 **Member Development Update**

The Member Development Programme offered learning and development to support Members' effectiveness and confidence in their roles. A new and revised programme had been implemented in 2022 that reflected the issues identified across external reviews and associated improvement plan whilst aiming to build on the programme developed over the previous four years.

With regard to member attendance figures, the Committee requested the regular updates on attendance were brought back to the Committee to review.

There were a number of factors influencing the development of the member programme for 2023/24. Due to the evolving position and associated timescales, it was proposed that following consideration by the Working Group, the final Member Development Programme would be approved by the Chair of the Committee. This would allow for preparations to commence in advance of the election and in readiness for the start of the new municipal year.

As part of the Council's improvement plan, a review of the My Councillor Portal would be undertaken as part of the wider customer journey activity. Members would be integral to the review and would be invited to take part in a number of focus group activities to explore their experience of the portal and its future usage.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the detail of elected member learning and development activity that has been delivered since the beginning of the municipal year be noted;
- (2) that the approach for refreshing the Member Training Programme for 2023 be approved;

- (3) that the Chair of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee be authorised to agree the Member Development Programme following consideration by the Working Group;
- (4) that in consultation with the Chair, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to set performance indicator targets in relation to Member training;
- (5) that the approach in relation to the review of the Member Portal be approved.

12/23 **Gifts and Hospitality Register**

The Committee considered the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

13/23 **National Cases**

The Committee received and discussed details of national cases, as part of its learning and development.

14/23 **Complaints Update**

The Committee received an update in relation to complaints received under the Member Code of Conduct arrangements.

15/23 **Work Programme**

The Committee reflected upon the work programme for 2022/23.

Meeting ended at 4.34pm

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