

# Minutes of Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

**Tuesday 9 November 2021 at 2.00pm  
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

- Present:** Councillor Allcock (Chair)  
Councillors Kausar (Vice Chair), Akhter, Dhallu, Z Hussain  
and C Padda.
- Observers:** Mr John Tew and Mr Richard Phillips (Independent Persons).
- Also present:** Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance – Monitoring  
Officer), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager - Democracy),  
Maria Price (Service Manager – Legal), Terry Hassall (Health  
& Safety Manager), Dora Elkington (Health & Safety Lead  
Officer), Trisha Newton (Senior Democratic Services Officer)  
and Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer).

## 20/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chambers.

## 21/21 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

## 22/21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2021 were agreed as  
a correct record and signed by the Chair.



## 23/21 **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

## 24/21 **Personal Safety of Elected Members**

The Committee formally paid tribute to Sir David Amess MP.

The Committee had considered personal safety of elected members at its meeting on 4 October 2019 (minute no. 30/19 refers) with a further review to be undertaken in 12 months' time. The review had, however, been delayed due to the pandemic.

In view of the recent murder of Sir David Amess MP at a constituency surgery it was considered necessary to bring the review back to Committee without further delay.

The Health and Safety Manager provided an update to the Committee with regard the current process around personal safety. There was an ongoing programme of personal safety training for elected members.

Councillors had received revised guidance notes on general personal safety in the wake of the murder (i.e. lone-working, undertaking surgeries and walking to their vehicles).

Following comments and questions from members of the Committee, it was noted:-

- best practice would be to avoid lone working whenever possible - the dynamic risk assessment would allow members to consider their working practices;
- premises risk assessments would need to be undertaken by the premises manager of any internal and external venue - advice and guidance would be issued to premises managers to ensure risk assessments would be completed when Councillors used the venues;
- councillors would need to be more pro-active in considering risk assessments prior to engagements. The most prominent concern for lone working remained health issues and not receiving prompt care as a response.



The Committee noted that the Ethical Standards Working Group would commence a further review of personal safety for elected members.

25/21

### Appointment to Ethical Standards Sub Committees

The Localism Act 2011 required authorities 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).

Following a change in appointments to the Committee, consideration was given to the revised appointment to the two Ethical Standards Sub-Committees for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.

**Resolved** that the revised appointments to the two Ethical Standards Sub-Committees for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year be approved, with flexibility between membership to cater for availability and workload, as follows:

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
Dhallu		Kausar	
Akhter		O Jones	
Z Hussain		C S Padda	
Chambers		Chambers	
+ Independent Person		+ Independent Person	

26/21

### Member Development Programme Update

The Committee received an update on the member portal and member development activity.



With respect to the MyCouncillor portal, members had continued to engage and use the portal. Participation had been good with 67 members activity engaging with the 35 group guidance sessions. Member use of the portal had increased throughout the roll-out.

With regard to member development, the Council had set-up a programme of learning and development interventions, targeted toward supporting members across their various roles.

A review was recommended that would be undertaken to engage with elected members, providing an assessment of the effectiveness of existing arrangements and develop proposals for consideration in line with best practice, which would be delivered before the end of the municipal year.

The review would be led by the Ethical Standards Working Group and the Committee was also requested to appoint a member of the Committee to the vacancy which currently existed on the Group.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that a review of the member development programme be undertaken by the Ethical Standards Working Group;
- (2) that Councillor Dhallu be added to the membership of the Ethical Standards Working Group.

27/21

**Review of Independent Persons – Recruitment Process and Remuneration**

Mr Tew, Independent Person, left the meeting during consideration of this item.

The Ethical Standards Working Group met on 5 October 2021 to consider the recruitment process for a third Independent Person for dealing with standards matters.



The Committee considered the proposed timeline for recruitment process would involve a targeted approach across multiple stakeholders, with a particular focus would be on encouraging applications from a wide variety of backgrounds across communities.

The Committee also noted that the term of office for Mr John Tew was due to expire in January 2022. The Committee recommended that a report be submitted to Full Council seeking a four year extension to Mr Tew's term of office.

**Resolved:-**

(1) that the recruitment process for a third Independent Person for dealing with standards matters be approved.

(2) that Council be recommended to extend the term of office for Mr John Tew for a further four year period.

**28/21 Committee on Standards in Public Life Annual Report 2020-21**

The Annual Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life was considered and noted by the Committee.

**29/21 Gifts and Hospitality**

The Committee considered the Gifts and Hospitality Register and declaration of interests made by Members.

Following the Best Practice recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Gifts and Hospitality Register was a standing agenda item for meetings of the Committee.

One new entry to the Gifts and Hospitality Register had been made since the last meeting of the Committee.



30/21 **National Cases**

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

31/21 **Complaints Update**

The Committee received details of complaints received in relation to member conduct and the progress on the complaints.

32/21 **Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Ethical Standards and Member Development Work Programme for the remaining 2021/22 municipal year.

Meeting ended at 2.49pm

Contact: [democratic\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)

