

Standards Committee

Tuesday 31 January, 2023 at 6.00pm.

In a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Members Present

Councillor Kaur (Chair)
Councillor Burley (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Allen
Councillor Andrew
Councillor James
Councillor Lee
Councillor Nazir
Councillor Towe
Councillor Sears
Councillor Nawaz

Independent Persons Present

Ms. D. Mardner

Officers Present

Mr A. Cox	-	Director of Governance
Ms S. Lloyd	-	Democratic Services Officer

37/22 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Follows, Councillor Young, Mr A. Green and Mr. C. Magness.

38/22 Substitutions

Councillor Sears substituted for Councillor Follows and Councillor Nawaz substituted for Councillor Young.

39/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

40/22 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items for consideration in private session.

41/22 Minutes of the two previous meetings

The Committee noted that Councillor Allen was in attendance at the meeting which took place on 11th July and requested that this was reflected in the minutes.

Resolved

That, subject to the abovementioned changes, the minutes of the meetings held 11th July and 24th October be approved as correct records.

42/22 Review of Planning Protocol Guidance

The Director of Governance presented a report which outlined the details of the ongoing review of the Planning Protocol Guidance which is included as part of the council's constitution. It was noted that this was required due to recent high profile cases in High Court and the government's declared intention to further amend planning law. The Director of Governance informed the Committee that the last such update of the Planning Protocol Guidance had been approved by Council in June 2014 and since this time there had been various changes which would also need to be reflected in the new version.

Resolved

That:

- 1. The report be noted; and**
- 2. A further report to be submitted to Standards Committee on the conclusion of the review to include training proposals for Members.**

43/22 Standards of Conduct for Senior Officers

The Committee received a report requested at the previous meeting in relation to Standards of Conduct which senior officers at the council must adhere to. The Director of Governance advised that the Employee Code of Conduct, which is approved by Personnel Committee, applies to all officers at the council and was last reviewed in 2022. He added that Mr Green had provided his feedback in the form of an email which had been shared with the Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration for

consideration during the next review of the code. In this email Mr Green outlined that he felt that the code was too lengthy and that there needed to be a stronger link between contracts of employment and the Employee Code of Conduct.

Members of the Committee discussed the dress code as set out in the Code of Conduct and were informed that no such dress code applied to Elected Members. The Director of Governance undertook to inform the Committee whether it was indeed line managers who set the minimum standard of dress expected of staff members and how frequently the Employee Code of Conduct was reviewed by Personnel Committee.

Resolved

That:

- 1. The report be noted; and**
- 2. The Director of Governance provides details on who is responsible for setting the minimum standard dress code and the review frequency of the Employee Code of Conduct.**

44/22 Members Criminal Record Checks

The Director of Governance presented a report on the current status of Members' criminal record checks. It was emphasised that this was not a legal requirement but was introduced by Council on 25th May 2016 as part of a desire to maintain transparency, high standards of behaviour, accountability and protection of Members following several national abuse enquiries. He provided the up-to-date position that 40 Members had now completed the DBS process and 4 simply needed to provide their ID in order to complete the process. This left 16 Members who had yet to complete the process.

The Director of Governance outlined that some of these Members may indeed have had DBS checks either for their employment or voluntary roles and, if this were the case, they could simply be shown to the Monitoring Officer rather than having to complete the process again.

Members of the Committee were supportive of the process and encouraging those Members who had not yet completed the process to do so. They asked whether the process was covered by the Code of Conduct for Elected Members and if sanctions could be applied to those who do not complete the process.

Resolved

That

1. The report be noted;
2. An email be sent to all Members to remind them of the reasoning for the criminal record checks and explain the necessity of the process;
3. A further report to return to Standards Committee on progress including details about other Local Authorities and their processes.

45/22 **Date of next meeting.**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be the 12th April 2023.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.50pm.

Chair

Date