

MINUTES OF AUDIT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

25 November 2024

PRESENT:

Mr J Eves (Vice-Chair), Councillors Howling, Karadiar and Roodhouse.

ALSO PRESENT:

Aftab Razzaq, Chief Officer – Legal and Governance

22. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 were deferred to the next meeting.

23. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Mr P Dudfield (Chair) and Councillor Simpson-Vince.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

25. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S STANDARDS PROCESSES

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer (Part 1 – Agenda Item 4). The Chief Officer for Legal and Governance highlighted the recommendation to Council of the adoption of the updated complaints process, the member champion role and the necessary constitutional amendments to make these changes occur. The updated complaints process and code of conduct were highlighted as streamlining the process of dealing with a complaint through embedding key milestones.

It was discussed whether Standards should be dealt with separately from Audit or whether it should remain under the remit of the Committee. The Committee agreed with the report stating that Standards should remain part of the Audit and Ethics Committee and a greater focus should be placed on Standards, through either regular reports to the Committee or a Standing Item on every agenda. It was agreed that these changes would allow checks and balances to be embedded within the Committee.

The Member Champion role was discussed, as the figurehead for Standards amongst Councillors. It was agreed by the Committee that the role should be filled by a Councillor and that this Councillor should not be a member of the Executive (Cabinet) or the Audit and Ethics Committee, as this would keep the role separate and give the Councillors in the role more freedom. Further discussion was had around having two Councillors share the role, to ensure that the workload is shared and promote standards further within the Council.

The role that the Chair and Vice-Chair play in the new complaints procedure was clarified by the Chief Officer for Legal and Governance and the importance of the Committee retaining its independent nature was discussed. The Chief Officer for Legal and Governance also clarified how the new code of conduct would provide Councillors a better understanding of the definition of non-pecuniary interests and therefore what should be declared before a meeting.

RESOLVED THAT – the Committee recommends the following to Council:

1. The adoption of the revised Code of Conduct (following the LGA Model Code) as set out in Appendix 2 of this report;
2. The adoption of the revised complaints handling process, and consequential constitutional amendments as set out in Appendix 3;
3. That the Constitution of the Council be amended to incorporate the changes set out in Appendix 2 and 3 and the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make such typographical amendments as required to facilitate this; and
4. That the Member Champion for Standards role profile be adopted and that the Council appoint a Member(s) to this role. It be recommended that the Member Champions are not members of the Executive or the Audit and Ethics Committee.

26. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC UNDER SECTION 100(A)(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

RESOLVED THAT – under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of information defined in paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

27. WHISTLEBLOWING INCIDENTS

There were no issues to report.

28. FRAUD AND CORRUPTION ISSUES

There were no issues to report.

CHAIR