

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 8 November 2021 at 14:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

R. Jaffray in the Chair

Councillors Clive Moesby (Vice-Chair), David Downes, Graham Parkin and Deborah Watson.

Officers:- Sarah Sternberg (Solicitor to the Council & Monitoring Officer), Kevin Shillitto (Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Lisa Ingram (Legal Team Manager – Contentious Team), Nicola Calver (Governance Manager), Ann Bedford (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer) and Amy Bryan (Senior Governance Officer).

STA16-21/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tricia Clough and David Dixon.

STA17-21/22 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to be considered at the meeting.

STA18-21/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

STA19-21/22 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor David Downes and seconded by Councillor Graham Parkin
RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on 20 September 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

STA20-21/22 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS / COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2020/21

Committee considered a report regarding the Council's performance in relation to its customer services standards and the number of compliments, comments and complaints for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021, along with an annual summary.

In respect of customer services the report set out performance against the targets for

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telephones, contact centres, revenues & benefits, emails and face to face monitoring. The report also detailed the number of compliments, comments and complaints that had been received during this monitoring period.

The Committee welcomed the report and how it showed that the Council was still providing an excellent level of customer service.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Graham Parkin

RESOLVED that the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints, be noted.

STA21-21/22 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2020/21

Committee considered a report which provided information contained within the Annual Letter from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) 2020/21, which was appended to the report.

The LGSCO letter contained an annual summary of statistics on the complaints made against the Council for the financial year ending 31 March 2021.

The LGSCO had received 6 enquiries and complaints during 2020/21, one of which had been subject to a detailed investigation. In total, the LGSCO had decided 7 complaints, of which 2 were incomplete or invalid, 2 had been closed after initial enquiries, and in 2 cases advice had been given. The remaining complaint had been decided as 'maladministration and injustice'.

Benchmarking information looking at close neighbouring authorities comparative figures was contained in the report for Committee's information.

Moved by Councillor Graham Parkin and seconded by Councillor David Downes

RESOLVED that the overall performance, the Annual Letter from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman 2020/21 and the report, be noted.

STA22-21/22 UPDATE ON THE DELEGATION SCHEME

Committee considered a report which set out an update on the Council's Delegation Scheme.

The report explained that there was an ongoing Senior Management Review and as a result it had been necessary to consider the Delegation Scheme. The Delegation Scheme had been revised under delegation to ensure that relevant delegations could still be legally and properly used with the changes made so far. The Delegated Decision was attached to the report. The revised scheme allocated existing delegations only to officers within the new structure. There were no new delegations.

It would be necessary to undertake a full review including consideration of what additional delegations may be required and for these to be built into the new Delegation Scheme once the Senior Management Review was complete. Once the review was complete a revised Delegation Scheme would be brought to the Committee.

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Committee provided a number of comments on the current scheme that would be fed into the full review.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor David Downes

RESOLVED that the Delegated Decision aligning the Delegation Scheme to the new Senior Management structure be noted, and that a draft Delegation Scheme be brought to the Committee when the Senior Management Review was complete.

STA23-21/22 MEMBER TRAINING ATTENDANCE

Committee considered a report which provided information on the attendance by Councillors at recent training sessions.

The report set out details of attendance at the Mid-Term Induction Programme sessions, which had been held in May and June 2021. Also set out were details of any other training that had been held so far during 2021/22 and the current position regarding mandatory training.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Deborah Watson

RESOLVED that the information and statistics regarding Member training be noted.

STA24-21/22 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

Committee considered a report in relation to areas for review within the Council's constitution.

The following areas had been identified for review at this meeting.

a) Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference

It was proposed to add into the terms of reference for the Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee 'to evaluate the tenders for the appointment of external auditors.'

b) Review of the guidance and constitutional rules on public speaking at Council

The guidance and rules on public speaking at Council had been reviewed. A revised version of the Council Procedure Rules and the guidance were attached to the report at Appendix 3 and 4.

Committee discussed the proposed changes, in particular the time limit for public questions. It was suggested that the time limit remain at 30 minutes, and not be reduced to 15 minutes as proposed. It was noted that within the 5 minute limit per questioner someone could read out a lengthy statement and only ask a question within the last sentences. Officers agreed to consider if there was anything that could be added to mitigate this and ensure the time was for questions and not speeches.

c) Training requirements for Councillors

The mandatory training schedule, as set out in the Members' Code of Conduct, was

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attached to the report at Appendix 2 in order for the Committee to determine whether it wished to make any changes at this time. No changes were suggested although Committee discussed the frustration that there was nothing the Council could do to enforce attendance at training. It was noted that this was only something that could be managed through the Group process.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Deborah Watson

RESOLVED that –

- 1) the proposed changes at a) be agreed.
- 2) the time permitted for public questions at Council remain at 30 minutes but all other proposed changes at b) be agreed.
- 3) No change be made to the mandatory training schedule for Councillors.

STA25-21/22 COMPLAINTS UPDATE

Committee received a quarterly update and a verbal update provided by the Monitoring Officer in relation to complaints received against Members.

There were currently 14 ongoing complaints; 12 regarding Parish Councillors and 2 regarding District Councillors.

Moved by Councillor Deborah Watson and seconded by Councillor David Downes

RESOLVED that the updated be noted.

STA26-21/22 WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022

Committee considered its work programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Deborah Watson

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

The meeting concluded at 14:39 hours.