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## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday, 13 July 2021 at 6.00 pm in Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford TF3 4NT

**Present:** Councillors G H Cook (Chair), N A M England, A D McClements (Vice-Chair), G C W Reynolds, P J Scott and J M Seymour

**Also Present:** Councillor Rae Evans

**In Attendance:** A Lowe (Associate Director: Policy and Governance), R Phillips (Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy), J Clarke (Democracy Officer) and L Gordon (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

**Apologies:** A J Eade

#### **ST1      Declarations of Interest**

None

#### **ST2      Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

J M Seymour requested it be recorded that she voted against agenda item ST18 and the exclusion of the word 'somehow' and asked that this be reflected in the minutes.

**Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to the above amendment.

#### **ST3      Terms of Reference**

The Associate Director: Policy and Governance introduced the Terms of Reference for Standards Committee. The Constitution required that Full Council should agree at its Annual Meeting the Terms of Reference for each of its Committees to enable the Council to efficiently conduct its business. At the Annual Meeting on 29 April 2021, Full Council delegated authority to each Committee to review its own Terms of Reference. There were no changes to the Standards Committee Terms of Reference.

**RESOLVED** – that the Terms of Reference be approved.

#### **ST4      Code of Conduct**

The Committee received an update from The Associate Director: Policy and Governance on the Model Code of Conduct following final comments received at the last meeting of the Committee, and in advance of a recommendation to

full Council. Amendments had been made to remove the word 'someone' when discussing how Councillors conducted themselves in their private lives. An additional condition had been included, at the request of Members, outlining how the code related to the Council's role as a corporate parent. Clarification had also been provided as to when the Code Conduct would apply.

The Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct had recommended that the limit for any gift or hospitality would be set at £50, but following Committee discussions this had been amended to remain at the current limit of £25. Members asked for clarity on what was acceptable. The Associate Director: Policy and Governance clarified that if any Councillor estimated the gift or hospitality to be over the value of £25 then it would need to be declared. This was also the case if the same person had offered multiple gifts which accumulated to a value above £25.

Some Committee members noted dissatisfaction about the lack of sanctions outlined and questioned what powers could be utilised. The Associate Director: Policy and Governance acknowledged that the Monitoring Officer's powers were limited by the law, but that the Committee for Standards on Public Life on Ethical Standards in Local Government had recommended that powers such as those to suspend Councillors be reinstated. Members were advised that when a complaint was reported to the Monitoring Officer the possible outcomes were outlined which prevented unrealistic expectations.

The Committee were informed that once the code was adopted training would be provided to all members.

Upon being put to the vote it was, by a majority:

**Resolved – that the Code of Conduct be recommended to full Council for adoption.**

The meeting ended at 18.21.

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** Tuesday, 1 February 2022