

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

*At a meeting of the Standards Committee Wednesday, 6 February 2019 Boardroom -
Municipal Building, Widnes*

Present: Councillors P. Lloyd Jones (Chair), M. Bradshaw, Howard, J. Lowe, Sinnott, Wainwright, Wharton, Zygadlo, Mr A. Luxton (Independent Co-optee) and Reverend D. Felix (Parish Council Co-optee), Professor D. Norman (Independent Person) and Mr R. Radley (Independent Person)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor McDermott and Mrs D. Howard (Independent Person)

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney and A. Scott

Also in attendance: One member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE

		<i>Action</i>
STC1	MINUTES	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2018, having been circulated, were signed as a correct record.</p>	
STC2	RESIGNATION OF INDEPENDENT CO-OPTEE	
	<p>The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer reported that he had received a letter of resignation from Mrs Anita Morris, Independent Co-optee.</p> <p>Mrs Morris had served on the Committee for a number of years, but had been unable to attend recent meetings due to conflicting demands. The Committee understood the situation and reluctantly accepted her resignation. The Chair expressed his thanks for her contribution to the work of the Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the resignation of Mrs Morris, Independent Co-optee, be accepted.</p>	

STC3 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer, which summarised the work of the Committee in the last Municipal Year.

At the meeting in February 2018, Members had considered the Annual Report, which summarised the work of the Committee. There had been an update on issues that had arisen in other parts of the country, which provided an insight into the nature of matters raised and how they were dealt with elsewhere.

A verbal update was given on local matters which had been considered since the previous meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and referred to Council for information.

STC4 STANDARDS COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with an update on issues which had arisen in other parts of the country, which provided an insight into the kind of issues faced and the manner in which they had been proceeded.

Details on recent cases were given from a range of locations which included the following:-

- Rochdale;
- Stoke on Trent;
- Wigan;
- Devon;
- Northamptonshire;
- East Riding;
- Leicestershire;
- Sheffield;
- Coventry; and
- Staffordshire.

A verbal update was given on three local matters that had been considered since the last meeting. It was reported that one of the Committees' Independent Persons had been consulted on one of the cases.

RESOLVED: That the report and verbal update be noted.

Operational
Director, Legal
and Democratic
Services/Monitoring
Officer

STC5 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with a verbal update on the publication of a report into local government standards, by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

It was reported that the independent Committee on Standards in Public Life advised the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK. Their report and recommendations on ethical standards in local government, followed a year-long review and wide consultation, was published on 30 January 2019. Key recommendations included:-

- A new power for local authorities to suspend Councillors without allowances for up to six months;
- Revised rules on declaring interests, gifts and hospitality;
- Local authorities to retain ownership of their own Codes of Conduct;
- A right of appeal for suspended Councillors to the Local Government Ombudsman;
- A strengthened role for the Independent Person; and
- Greater transparency about the number and nature of Code complaints.

The review covered all 353 principal authorities in England, and its remit was to review the effectiveness of the current arrangements for standards in local government, particularly in light of the changes made by the Localism Act 2011.

It was agreed that a link to the publication would be sent to all members of the Committee as well as to all Borough Councillors.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

Meeting ended at 2.38 p.m.