

**REPORT TO:** Audit & Governance Board

**DATE:** 29 September 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community & Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** Standards Matters

**WARDS:** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to invite Members to consider the arrangements for dealing with Standards matters following the decision of the Council on 14 July 2021 that this Board assume responsibility for the work of the former Standards Committee and that its terms of reference be amended as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members approve the arrangements as set out in this report for dealing with Standards matters following the decision of Council on 14 July 2021 that this Board assume the responsibilities of the former Standards Committee.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Members will recall that the Council on 14 July 2021 approved a recommendation of this Board on 7 July that the Board assume the responsibilities of the previous Standards Committee, with revised terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1 of this report. Council also approved the arrangements for dealing with individual Standards complaints, again on the recommendation of this Board. These are contained in Appendix 2.

3.2 Standards Committee met once in each Municipal Year and comprised of 9 elected Members, 2 Independent Co-opted Members (one of these positions was vacant) and 2 Parish Council representatives (again, one position was vacant). In addition, the 2 Independent Persons appointed by the Council to consider complaints under the Localism Act were invited to each meeting.

3.3 The meeting would approve the Annual Report from the municipal year for submission to council, and receive an update from the Monitoring Officer on Standards issues both nationally & locally. Of course, other issues within the terms of reference of the Committee would be brought before Members as they arose. Although there was only one meeting per year in the Committee calendar, there was always scope for additional meetings to be called when necessary, but they were never in fact required.

3.4 Sitting below the Standards Committee, there was a Hearings Panel, to consider the outcome of formal investigations into complaints that Members or Parish Councillors may have broken the Code of Conduct. This comprised of 3

Members, to be drawn from the Standards Committee, and not from the same political party if possible. No more than 1 Member of the Executive Board was able to sit on the Panel. The Panel is to be retained on the same basis in the arrangements approved by Council, and will now sit beneath this Board, with the 3 Members appointed ad hoc and as necessary from the membership of the Board. There could either be a named Chair, or the Chair could be appointed from the membership on the day. It has not so far been necessary for the Hearings Panel to meet. It is suggested that training could be given to Panel Members on the day of any necessary hearing.

- 3.5 Prior to this meeting of the Board, all Members of the Council will have been invited to a training session on the new Code of Conduct, to take place on 15 September.
- 3.6 It is considered that the new arrangements will benefit the Council, with this Board meeting more regularly than Standards Committee did, thereby enabling reports to be brought in a timely manner, without the need to call additional meetings.
- 3.7 Members are asked to consider the way in which they require the new arrangements to operate.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no specific implications in respect of Council policy.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no specific implications.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no specific implications.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There are no specific implications.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

There are no specific implications.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

There are no specific implications.

##### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

There are no specific implications.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

No risks have been identified which require control measures.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

None.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

No background papers have been used in the preparation of the report.