

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 21 November 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Mrs Joan Lloyd (Chairman), Philip Bibby CC, Graham Lawrence CC, Lin Martin-Haugh, Claire Parris (substitute), Simon Speller and Tom Wren.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.17pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Myla Arceno and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE. Councillor Claire Parris was substituting for Baroness Taylor.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 31 JANUARY 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 31 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

The Committee considered a revised Code of Conduct for Members for onward recommendation to Council.

The Committee was informed that the Council had not revised its Code of Conduct for Members for 10 years. In order to ensure that Members were able to maintain the highest possible standards it was now appropriate for the Council to update its Code of Conduct.

The Committee was advised that the proposed revised Code of Conduct, attached at Appendix A to the report, was based on the Local Government Association's (LGA) Model Code. In order to support Councils, Councillors and Monitoring Officers in maintaining the highest possible standards of behaviour in public life, the LGA had also produced Guidance on the Model Code.

The Committee noted that the revised Code covered a greater range of conduct matters than the current Code, setting out specific (and explicit) standards of required behaviour on issues including Respect; Bullying, harassment and discrimination; Impartiality of officers of the Council; Confidentiality and access to

information; Disrepute; Use of position; Use of local authority resources and facilities; Complying with the Code; Protecting the reputation of Members and the local authority; Gifts and hospitality; the Seven Principles of Public Life; and registering interests.

The Committee further noted that failure to adopt a revised Code of Conduct would put the Council at risk of not meeting the best possible standards of conduct in public life.

The following comments were made by Members in respect of the revised Code:

- Respect – this section of the Code (Section 1) was welcomed, especially the expectation that the relationship between Members and the public should be one of two-way respectful behaviour either through dealings in-person or via electronic means; and
- Training on the new Code should be made available to all Members, and it was felt that the timing of such training should coincide with the induction programme for new Members following the May 2023 Local Elections. The training should include a focus on Section 3 of the Code (Impartiality of officers of the Council), in order to emphasise that officers worked for the local authority as a whole and were politically neutral.

The Committee made the following minor amendments to the Code:

- Gifts and Hospitality (Section 10) – it was agreed that Paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3 should be merged into a single paragraph; and
- Table 2 in Appendix B to the Code – correction of the title from “Registrable” to “Registerable”.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft Code of Conduct for Members, as attached at Appendix A to the report, and as amended, be recommended to Council for approval.

4 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

5 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIRMAN