

## **Minutes of the Standards and Ethics Committee**

**County Hall, Worcester, WR5 2NP**

**Wednesday, 20 October 2021, 10.00 am**

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### **Present:**

Cllr Bob Brookes (Chairman), Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr David Chambers,  
Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Dan Morehead and Cllr Tom Wells

Independent Members (Non-voting): Dr Murray Mylechreest and Mr Cliff Slade

### **Available papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 (previously circulated).

### **296 Apologies and Named Substitutes (Agenda item 1)**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mike Rouse and Dr Philip Whiteman.

### **297 Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 2)**

None.

### **298 Public Participation (Agenda item 3)**

None.

### **299 Confirmation of Minutes (Agenda item 4)**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **300 Code of Conduct Complaints Update and Monitoring Officer Report (Agenda item 5)**

The Committee considered the Code of Conduct Complaints Update and Monitoring Officer Report.

In the ensuing debate, concern was expressed about member compliance with GDPR regulations. In response Abe Ezekiel, Assistant Director for Legal and Governance commented that the main issue for members in complying with GDPR regulations was not necessarily the need for additional training but members developing more self-awareness in the actions that they take.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) **The formal complaints that have been made about the conduct of County Councillors and their outcome be noted; and**
- b) **The induction process for new Councillors following the County Council elections be noted.**

### **301 Local Government Association Member Code of Conduct (Agenda item 6)**

The Committee considered the Local Government Association Member Code of Conduct.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- Abe Ezekiel introduced the report and commented that recent feed-back from the LGA had indicated that 70% of councils across the country considered that their Code of Conduct was inadequate. It was clear that different councils worked in different ways and the best way to approach this was to mesh the existing pan Worcestershire Code with elements of best practice elsewhere. It was important that the code was simple and clear to understand. This was the rationale for the LGA's development of a model code
- The lack of sanctions against councillors for breaching the Code was surprising. How far progressed was the Government's review of local government ethical standards? Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager indicated that the previous standards legislation had included a number of sanctions for breaches of the Code. However, the Government considered that the legislation undermined the ability of a councillor to carry out their duties. A review of ethical standards was not high on the Government's list of proposed legislation hence the LGA's attempt to develop some consistency of approach
- It was important that the key stakeholders were brought together within the county to ensure a consistent approach to standards within the county
- The Planning and Regulatory Committee seemed to be the most difficult area for members in terms of understanding the distinction between pre-disposition and pre-determination. The Chairman highlighted the benefit of the recent training for Planning and Regulatory Committee members in this respect

- It would be beneficial if lessons learned from particular cases investigated by the Monitoring Officer could be shared with parish and town councils
- In response to a query about local amendments to the pan Worcestershire Code, Sheena Jones indicated that there had been a few minor local amendments but nothing of any significance.

**RESOLVED** that the update about the LGA member Code of Conduct be noted.

The meeting ended at 10.20am.

Chairman .....