

Time commenced – 6.03pm
Adjourned – 6.48pm

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
19 July 2016

Present: Councillors Shanker (Chair), Graves, A Holmes, Jackson, Whitby and Alan Cameron and Philip Sunderland

In Attendance: Janie Berry –Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
Steven Mason – Democratic Services Officer

27/15 Apologies

Apologies were received from Peter Purnell.

28/15 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

29/15 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

30/15 Minutes of the meetings held on 1 October 2015, 26 January 2016, 23 February 2016, 22 March 2016, 5 April 2016

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 October 2015, 26 January 2016, 23 February 2016, 22 March 2016 and 5 April 2016 were noted.

31/15 Report in the Public Interest Issued by Grant Thornton for the Audit of Accounts 2013/14 and 2014/15

The Committee received a report of the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer on Report in the Public Interest Issued by Grant Thornton for the Audit of Accounts 2013/14 and 2014/15.

It was reported that on 16 June 2016, Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditors for the financial years up to and including 31st March 2015, published a Report in the Public Interest. Members noted that the Report in the Public Interest reported on a number of governance related issues, most of which were historical in nature. Members also noted that on 1 July 2016, the Administration placed an Action Plan before Full Council responding to the recommendations within the Report. It was

reported that as the report made reference to a number of Standards related issues it was felt appropriate for these to be shared with the Standards Committee.

The Committee discussed the action plan. It was noted that the Audit and Accounts Committee was responsible for oversight and progress of the Action Plan and that this was being monitored by external auditors. It was also noted that there was a review pending of the Standards regime.

Resolved to note the contents of the report in the Public Interest in so far as it refers to the Standards Committee and issues related to the Code of Conduct.

32/15 Referrals to the Monitoring Officer Relating to Taxi Licensing Issues

The Committee received a report of the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer on Referrals to the Monitoring Officer Relating to Taxi Licensing Issues.

It was reported that on 25 November 2015 Full Council approved an amendment to the Code of Conduct for Councillors in that any instance of Member interference with Taxi Licensing would be recorded and reported to the Monitoring Officer. It was also reported that the Monitoring Officer reviews the records on a quarterly basis or sooner if the circumstances as they present require earlier intervention.

Members noted that in order to provide additional oversight, the Monitoring Officer would report the instances which had required her intervention to the Standards Committee for awareness raising and consideration and comment as necessary.

Members also noted that the Report in the Public Interest issued by Grant Thornton on 16th June 2016, expressed concerns about the Taxi Licensing function operated by the Council. It was reported that in response, the Administration has prepared an Action Plan. It was also reported that the Action Plan also made reference to the instances of Member interference in taxi licensing being reported to the Standards Committee.

It was noted that there had been three instances to date where the Monitoring Officer had felt it appropriate to intervene. It was reported that in these instances, the advice of the Monitoring Officer was that these would be accepted as formal referrals without the requirement for a completed Complaints Form.

The Committee considered the three referrals as outlined in the report (2 for Councillor Nawaz and 1 for Councillor J Khan).

It was reported that Councillor Nawaz had asked for training. The Committee agreed that Councillor J Khan should also receive further training.

Resolved:

- 1. to note the contents of the report; and**
- 2. to agree that Councillor J Khan receives further training on the Code of Conduct and Taxi Licensing.**

33/15 Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2015/16 and Summary of Progress with Member Complaints 2015/16

The Committee received reports of the Director of Governance on Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2015/16 and Summary of Progress with Member Complaints 2015/16.

It was reported that the Chair of the Standards Committee for the municipal year 2015/16, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, resolved to produce an Annual Report detailing the work of the Standards Committee during the municipal year. The Committee considered the annual report and agreed it, with minor amendments.

The Committee also considered the Summary of Progress with Member Complaints 2015/16 report. Members noted that 25 complaints about Councillors were received in the 2015/16 municipal year. Members also noted that four complaints had been carried over to the 2016/17 municipal year.

Resolved:

- 1. to agree the draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee for the 2015/16 municipal year for submission to Council; and**
- 2. to note the information contained in Appendix 2 of the Summary of Progress with Member Complaints 2015/16 report.**

MINUTES END