

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of Standards Committee

Date: Tuesday, 28th July, 2020

Place: Virtual Meeting - MS Teams

Present: Councillor I Shead (Chair)
Councillors B Ayling, D Cowan, A Dear, M Flewitt, D Garne,
*P Collins, *D McGlone and *C Willis

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: Councillor M Dent and K Evans
Councillor Bromfield (LTC - Observer),
J Morgan and J Tetley (Independent Persons)
A Griffin, J Williams, S Brown and R Harris

Also in attendance: C Tredget (LGA)

Start/End Time: 6.00 - 7.45 pm

216 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Burzotta (substitute: Cllr McGlone), Hooper (substitute: Cllr Collins) and Nevin (substitute: Cllr Willis).

217 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this meeting.

218 Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 3rd October 2019

Resolved:-

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 3rd October 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

219 Local Government Association Consultation on draft Model Member Code of Conduct

The Committee considered a report of Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) informing the Committee of the consultation by the Local Government Association (LGA) on its draft Model Member Code of Conduct. The consultation runs for 10 weeks from 8 June until 17 August 2020.

The Committee had a detailed discussion on the Model Code and a number of comments were made concerning the proposed draft response to the consultation questionnaire.

Resolved:

1. That the response to the Local Government Association's consultation on its draft Model Member Code of Conduct attached at Appendix 3 to the submitted report, be endorsed, subject to the response at Question 17 being revised as follows:

- a) The general obligations in the draft Model Code could better reflect the Nolan Principles;
- b) It would be useful if the LGA developed an informal process for resolving disputes, particularly between Councillors. The Internal Resolution Procedure on page 7 of the Model Code is not detailed enough. Also consideration should be given as to whether details of cases which are resolved internally should be made public; and
- c) The LGA should lobby Central Government to give Standards Committees the power to impose significant sanctions.

2. That the agreed response referred to in resolution 1 above should be circulated to all Councillors together with a link to the LGA Consultation paper. This would enable Councillors to submit their own response to the LGA's Consultation if they so wish and/or elicit support from political peer groups.

220 Minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee held Thursday, 18th June 2020

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee held on Thursday, 18th June 2020, be noted.

221 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:-

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below, on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

222 Refresh of Protocol on Councillor / Officer Relations

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive presenting progress to date on the refresh of the Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations work. Following the initial decision to refresh the Protocol in October 2019, meetings have been arranged with Councillors and Officers, contributions have been gathered, and the summary of those representations are presented in Appendices 1 and 2, along with identified themes and a number of recommendations.

The Committee had a detailed discussion and in general were very supportive of the work and the recommendations set out in the report. The Committee also extended their thanks and appreciation to Sarah Brown and Cecilia Tredget for their input and work.

The report drew attention to the positive steps which have already been taken to address the concerns of Councillors, in particular:

- Councillor enquiries process has been enhanced;
- Officers and Councillors have collaborated well to establish and run a virtual format to enable key meetings and the democratic system to continue;
- Councillors have embraced the challenge of adapting to new ICT which has enhanced our collective ability to work more flexibly;
- Officers and Councillors have collaborated well to agree and produce a timely COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan

The Chief Executive confirmed that a training and development programme was being organised for Councillors and officers to include (a) equalities and diversity and (b) safeguarding training.

Resolved:

1. That the recommendations set out in Appendix 1 (without the section on the conduct of scrutiny reviews in Section 7.2) and Appendix 2 of the submitted report, be approved.
2. That a revised draft Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations together with associated recommendations, be brought back to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

Chair: _____