

Standards Advisory Committee Procedures

1. Composition

1.1 The Standards Advisory Committee shall be comprised of 5 Members of the Council (not including the Mayor or more than 1 Cabinet Member) and each political group may appoint up to 3 substitutes, appointed by the Council in accordance with the requirements of political proportionality; and up to 5 persons who are not Members or officers of the Council or any other relevant authority (i.e. Co-opted members).

1.2 The Co-opted member(s) will be entitled to vote at meetings under the provisions of section 13(4)(e) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Standards Advisory Committee shall be chaired by a Co-opted member.

1.3 The Committee shall establish Hearings and other Sub-Committees in accordance with its terms of reference and these procedures.

2. Appointment of Co-Opted Members

2.1 A person may not be appointed as a Co-opted member of the Standards Advisory Committee or one of its sub-committees unless the appointment is approved by Full Council. The term of appointment shall be for 4 years unless otherwise determined by Council or the Co-optee does not continue to fulfil any required conditions as may be determined by the Authority from time to time. Co-opted members may serve as many terms of appointment as the Council considers appropriate.

3. Roles and Functions

3.1 The Standards Advisory Committee has the following roles:

(a) To recommend to the Monitoring Officer whether or not any complaint of a breach by the Mayor, a Councillor or a co-opted member of the Members Code of Conduct should be referred for investigation by the Monitoring Officer or an investigator appointed by the Monitoring Officer; and where a complaint has been subject to such investigation, to recommend whether or not the complaint should proceed to hearing. Where the Monitoring Officer considers that a complaint should not be subject to investigation or should not proceed to hearing, they shall convene an Investigation and Disciplinary Sub-Committee of the Standards Advisory Committee comprising at least 3 different Members of the Standards Advisory Committee (comprising 2 of the co-opted members and 1 Councillor) which shall make the final decision on the matter;

(b) To receive regular quarterly reports from the Monitoring Officer on the numbers of complaints of the Code received, the decisions taken by the Monitoring Officer (in consultation with the Independent Person) on such complaints and investigation outcomes where the investigation determines there was no evidence of a failure to comply with the code or where the investigation outcome recommends a local resolution;

(c) To convene a Hearings Sub-Committee of 3 Members of the Standards Advisory Committee comprising 2 of the co-opted members and 1 Councillor to consider any matter where the investigation finds evidence of a failure to comply with the Code and a local resolution is not possible or appropriate;

(d) To make such recommendations to Council in respect of the matter as the Hearings Sub-Committee considers appropriate as a result of any matter referred including;

(i) Reporting its findings to Council for information;

(ii) Recommending to the member's Group Leader (or in the case of ungrouped members, recommend to Council or to Committees) removal from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;

(iii) Recommending to the Mayor removal from the Executive, or from particular Portfolio responsibilities;

(iv) Recommending the Monitoring Officer arrange training for the member;

(v) Recommending removal from outside appointments to which they have been appointed or nominated;

(vi) Recommending withdrawing facilities provided to the member by the Council, such as a computer, website and/or email and Internet access;

(vii) Recommending excluding the member from the Council's offices or other premises, with the exception of meeting rooms as necessary for attending Council, Executive Committee and Sub-Committee meetings;

(viii) Recommending the Member to contact the Council via specified point(s) of contact;

(e) To convene a Hearings (Appeal) Sub-Committee of at least three different Members of the Standards Advisory Committee (comprising 2 of the co-opted members and 1 Councillor) to consider any appeal against a finding of, or sanction recommended by, the Hearings Sub-Committee;

(f) To receive reports on compliance with any recommendation(s) made for sanctions to be applied in respect of any member;

(g) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the Mayor, Members of the Council, co-opted members including church and parent governor representatives and where the Committee considers that there may be issues of concern recommending that the Monitoring Officer considers and reports on the issues raised;

(h) Assisting the Mayor, Members of the Council, co-opted members including church and other faiths and parent governor representatives to observe the Council's Code of Conduct for Members;

(i) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Code of Conduct for Members;

(j) Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct for Members;

(k) Advising, training or arranging to train the Mayor, Members of the Council and co-opted members including church and other faiths and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Code of Conduct for Members;

(l) To act as an advisory body in respect of any matters referred to the Standards Committee by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) or Community Forums in respect of probity issues arising out of the codes and protocols applicable to relevant members of the LSP and Community Forums as set out in the Community Forum handbook and as may be amended from time to time;

(m) To advise on allegations of Member breaches of the Protocols set out in the constitution as may be referred to the Committee by the Monitoring Officer and to make recommendations with regard to such allegations as maybe so referred;

(n) Advising on local protocols for both Officer and Member governance;

(o) To monitor and review Member and Officer Procedures for registering interests and declaring gifts and hospitality;

(p) To receive periodic reports on the Council's Ethical Governance arrangements, on whistle blowing arrangements and complaints; and

(q) As requested by the Monitoring Officer, to establish a Dispensations Sub-Committee to advise on any applications for dispensations in relation to participation at a meeting by a member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

4. Validity of proceedings

4.1 A meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee or one of its sub-committees shall only be quorate where at least three members of the Committee or Sub-Committee are present for its duration and such quorum must include at least one councillor and at least one co-opted member.

4.2 Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972 applies in relation to meetings of the Standards Advisory Committee or its Sub-Committees as it applies to meetings of the Council.

5. Hearings Sub-Committee and Hearings (Appeal) Sub-Committee

5.1 Any Hearings Sub-Committee or Hearings (Appeal) Sub-Committee shall comprise a minimum of three Members of the Standards Advisory Committee at least two of whom shall be co-opted members.

5.2 The Hearings Sub-Committee shall consider complaints referred to it that the Mayor, an elected or co-opted Member of the Council may have failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct for Members or local protocol where the complaint has been subject to an investigation arranged by the Monitoring Officer and shall make recommendations accordingly. The Hearings Sub-Committee shall decide at the outset of the meeting whether it is in the public interest that the Hearing is held in a public or private session in accordance with relevant statutory guidance as advised by the Monitoring Officer.

5.3 The membership of the Hearings (Appeal) Sub-Committee shall not include any member who served on the Hearings Sub-Committee that considered the same complaint.

5.4 The Independent Person, or if that person is unable to act a reserve Independent Person, shall have the right to attend all meetings of the Hearings Sub-Committee or Hearings (Appeal) Sub-Committee as an observer but may not vote or participate in the decision making.

6. Attendance Requirements

6.1 In the event that any Member of the Committee does not attend three or more consecutive meetings of the Committee, the Committee may draw the attention of the Council to such non-attendance and may recommend that the member concerned be replaced on the Committee.

6.2 The Committee shall not do so without first giving the absent Member an opportunity to make representations (which may be made in writing) as to their non-attendance and any matters they wish the Committee to take into account.

7. Procedures

7.1 The Committee shall maintain these procedures to enable it to discharge the arrangements under its Terms of Reference.

8. Confidentiality

8.1 The Committee and any of its Sub-Committees may meet in private in accordance with the relevant legislation as advised by the Monitoring Officer. Any meeting or part of a meeting that considers whether or not a complaint should be referred for investigation or, following an investigation should proceed to hearing,

shall be held in private and all papers relating to that consideration shall remain confidential.