

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
19 October 2020

(Present) **Councillor Bond, Bowden, J Jackson, P Jackson, Jones, Maloney
MBE, Murphy, Quinn and Sims.**

Since publication of the Agenda Councillor Howard had resigned as a
Councillor for St Helens Borough Council.

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

- * **Resolved that Councillor Bond be appointed Chairman.**

Councillor Bond here took the Chair.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3 MINUTES

- * **Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 be
approved and signed.**

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

5 UPDATE ON LGA DRAFT MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

A report was submitted which provided the Committee with an update on
the Local Government Association's ("LGA") draft model code of conduct
for Members.

In January 2019, the Committee on Standards in Public Life ("CSPL") published
its report on Local Government Ethical Standards, which made a number of
recommendations to central government in relation to primary legislation and to
local authorities in relation to best practice.

One of the CSPL recommendations was for the LGA to create an updated model
code of conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and
officers of all tiers of local government. The purpose of having a code of conduct
for Members was to:

- promote high standards of conduct and trust;
- provide clarity about where boundaries are crossed for Members; and
- set out what the public can expect from their representatives.

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The LGA had reviewed the model code of conduct in response to the recommendations, but also in response to rising local government concern about the increasing incidence of public, member-to-member and officer/member intimidation and abuse and overall behavioural standards and expectations in public debate, decision making and engagement. The LGA aimed to develop a code that benchmarked a standard for all in public office and for those engaged in public discourse and debate. It will set out the duties and expectations of persons in public office.

A further report would be brought back to Standards Committee for consideration once the LGA model code of conduct is published. The Member model code of conduct was suggested national good practice, and councils can adopt this revised code, or adopt their own local code.

Currently, each of the local authorities and joint authorities across the Liverpool City Region have different local code of conducts which can cause inconsistency when Members are appointed to those bodies.

At the Standards Committee meeting held on 5 January 2015, a verbal report was received from the Monitoring Officer on a proposal for a Model Code of Conduct for Elected Members across the Liverpool City Region. The minutes from that meeting indicated the Monitoring Officer sought Members' views on whether St Helens Borough Council should enter into discussions to create a model Code of Conduct with the Liverpool City Region authorities and Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence.

The publication of the LGA model code would enable those in principle discussions to continue with colleagues across the region with a view to a draft Code being produced for further consideration.

* **Resolved that**

- (1) **the update on the LGA draft model code of conduct for Members be noted; and**
- (2) **the Monitoring Officer be authorised to continue with in principle discussions with the Liverpool City Region local authorities and joint authorities to create a model code of conduct for consideration for the Liverpool City Region.**

6 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE – PROGRESS ON BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

A report was submitted which provided the Committee with an update on progress in relation to the Committee on Standards in Public Life ("CSPL") Best Practice recommendations.

The CSPL had recently contacted all local authority Chief Executives requesting a response by 30 November 2020 on the Council's progress in relation to the best practice recommendations. Council responses would be published on the CSPL website in the new year.

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In January 2019, the CSPL published its Local Government Ethical Standards report, which made a number of recommendations, including some best practice recommendations to improve ethical standards in local government. The best practice represents a benchmark for ethical practice which the CSPL expect any local authority can and should implement.

The CSPL undertook in that report, to follow up and review the implementation of the best practice with local authorities this year. The Council was required to update the CSPL on its progress to implement the best practice recommendations.

A position statement on the Council's progress so far was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the Council's progress made so far in relation to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Best Practice recommendations be noted; and**
- (2) a Working Group of Members and officers be convened to consider the outstanding recommendations in relation to the Council's Procedure for Dealing with Complaints regarding breach of the Code of Conduct for Members and report back to the Standards Committee with recommendations.**