

Meeting	Joint Standards Committee
Date	13 June 2018
Present	Councillors Runciman (Chair), Cannon, Kramm and Richardson (CYC Members) Mr Laverick (Independent Person)
Apologies	Councillor Hayes (CYC Member) Councillor Wiseman (Parish Council Member) Ms Davies (Independent Person)

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they might have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

2. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Joint Standards Committee held on 18 April 2018 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. Minutes of Sub-Committees

Resolved: That the minutes of the Assessments Sub-Committee meeting held on 22 September 2017 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Gwen Swinburn spoke on matters within the committee's remit, touching on the substantive items on the agenda. She expressed concerns about the handling of complaints, the manner in which cases were reported to the committee and the council's approach to registration of interests.

5. Review of Complaints for the last Municipal Year

Members considered a report which provided an overview of standards complaints received during the 2017/18 municipal year.

The complaints were summarised in the table at paragraph 2 of the report. Twelve complaints had been received, slightly more than in recent years. Only two related to parish councillors, in line with the general trend over several years. One of the three investigations initiated had been outsourced to specialist solicitors due to its complexity. Three of the five cases decided by the Monitoring Officer under delegated powers had been resolved within three weeks. On average, cases referred to the Assessment Sub Committee had taken longer. No hearings had taken place.

During their debate, Members discussed actions required to ensure that the Register of Interests was kept up to date and the need for clarity in reporting the outcome of complaints.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That Members request their respective Group Leaders to ask their members to check their registered interests and update them if necessary.

(iii) That the terms used in future reports to describe the outcome of complaints be standardised where possible, with a column included in the table to record additional, anonymised, details of each case.

Reason: To ensure that the committee continues to make an effective contribution to ethical standards within the City of York Council.

6. Monitoring Report on Complaints Received

Members received a routine update report on recent standards complaints.

Of the cases reported as ongoing on 18 April, one had been concluded and two were still current. The report provided details of these cases in a new format, as requested by

Members at the last meeting. A further complaint had been received after publication of the report and the Monitoring Officer was awaiting clarification on this.

It was noted that the date of receipt of complaint no. 225 in the table at paragraph 2 of the report should read 29/8/**2017** instead of 2018.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the new style of reporting ongoing casework be accepted as providing sufficient information for the committee.

Reason: To ensure that the committee is aware of current levels of activity and that the standards complaints system is used for its primary purpose.

7. Standards Committee's Terms of Reference and Procedures

Members considered a report which sought their views on the continued suitability of procedures adopted in York for handling matters relating to ethical governance.

The report summarised events resulting in the establishment of the Joint Standards Committee and adoption of its Terms of Reference, Assessment Criteria and Complaints Procedures, as attached at Annexes 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Suggestions for possible changes were provided in paragraphs 4 to 8 of the report.

Members discussed whether to request input from other local authorities and the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YLCA), as well as the council's political groups. The Monitoring Officer advised that there were no recognised 'leaders' in this field but it was open to Members to seek information as they saw fit.

Resolved: (i) That the terms of references and procedures be considered initially by a Task Group comprising all members of the committee.

(ii) That the first meeting of the Task Group be held at 4:00pm on Wednesday, 18 July.

(iii) That the Monitoring Officer circulate the terms of reference and procedures to Group Leaders, Deputy Group Leaders and Independent Council Members in sufficient time for their comments to be put before the first meeting of the Task Group.

Reason: To give proper consideration to this matter and whether the procedures adopted by the committee remain fit for purpose.

8. Review of Work Plan

Members considered the committee's work plan for the 2018-19 municipal year.

In relation to items listed on the plan for the 5 September meeting, it was clarified that:

- the item on 'Wider issues of intimidation' related to a parliamentary debate on intimidation during the election campaign, particularly on social media.
- the views of political groups, Officers and Trades Unions would be sought on the Review of the Protocol on Officer / Member Relations.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved.

Reason: To ensure that the committee has a planned programme of work in place.

9. Update on Parish Membership

The Monitoring Officer gave a verbal update on the recruitment of new Parish Council Members to the committee. He confirmed that four nominations had been received to fill the current vacancies and that the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YLCA) were conducting a ballot and aimed to report the outcome on 2 July.

Resolved: (i) That the information provided be noted.

(ii) That the proposed new membership be reported directly to Full Council for approval.

(iii) That the Chair and the Monitoring Officer be authorised to arrange the necessary induction and training for the new members.

Reason: To enable the current vacancies to be filled, and the new members to participate in committee business, as soon as possible.

10. Chair's Comments - Review of Local Government Ethical Standards

The Chair requested an update on the progress of the committee's response to the consultation on the review of Local Government Ethical Standards, as agreed at the meeting on 18 April (Minute 35 refers).

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the government had acknowledged receipt of the response but no further correspondence had been received to date. The response was not a confidential document and could be made publicly available online.

Note: The finalised response has since been circulated to Members and published as a supplement to the agenda for the meeting on 18 April 2018.

Cllr C Runciman, Chair

[The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.02 pm.]