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Meeting	Joint Standards Committee
Date	13 February 2019
Present	Councillors Runciman (Chair), Kramm, Warters and Looker (substituting for Cllr Williams) (CYC Members) Councillors Chambers, Thornton and Wiseman (Vice-Chair) (Parish Council Members)
In Attendance	Mr Laverick (Independent Person)
Apologies	Councillors Brooks and Williams (CYC Members) Ms Davies (Independent Person)

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## 29. Chair's Comments

The Chair commented on the lessons to be learned from recent standards cases, particularly with regard to their length and complexity. She expressed her view that the process should take into account the seriousness of the case and the resources and sanctions available to the committee, as well as proportionality in terms of cost to both sides. She stressed the fundamental importance of upholding the integrity of the standards process in all cases.

The Chair went on to note that a review of the council's whistleblowing policy had recently been considered by Audit & Governance Committee. She requested that a task group be established to enable Joint Standards Committee to feed into the review process.

## 30. Declarations of Interest

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

### **31. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Committee held on 21 November 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

### **32. Minutes of Sub-Committees**

Resolved: (i) That the minutes of the following sub-committee meetings be approved and signed as a correct record:

- Assessments Sub-Committee – meeting held on 1 August 2018, adjourned to 8 August 2018.
- Hearings Sub-Committee – meeting held on 28 November 2018.
- Hearings Sub-Committee – meeting held on 16 January 2019.

(ii) That the meeting of the Hearings Sub-Committee held on 3 January 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments to Minute 3 (Public Participation):

- the words 'voicing her opinion' in the first paragraph (Gwen Swinburn) to be deleted and replaced by 'in particular';
- the words 'and her opinion' in the third paragraph (Cllr Reid) to be deleted and replaced by 'who felt'.

### **33. Public Participation**

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

Gwen Swinburn spoke on Agenda Item 3 (Minutes of Sub-Committees) and on matters within the Committee's remit. She sought amendments to the minutes of two of the Sub-Committee meetings in respect of the Public Participation item, made criticisms of council minutes in general and suggested a number of matters she felt the Committee should consider at future meetings.

In responding, the Chair indicated that one of the matters raised, the review of the Constitution, currently lay within the remit of the Audit & Governance Committee.

### **34. Monitoring Report on Complaints Received**

Members received a routine update report on recent standards complaints.

Since the committee's last meeting in November 2018, two long running cases had been concluded and two cases remained ongoing. Details were set out in the table at paragraph 2 of the report.

Members noted that one of the ongoing cases was likely to be concluded in February and stressed the importance of concluding the other case, which dated from 2017, before the start of the pre-election purdah period on 26 March 2019.

Resolved: That the report be noted, with the comments referred to above.

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

### **35. Update on Guidance on Civic Gifts and Hospitality**

Members considered a report which provided an update on the provision of guidance to the civic party on gifts and hospitality.

The draft guidance had been amended as agreed by Members at the meeting on 5 September 2018, and the current and former Lord Mayors had now been consulted on the amended version attached as Annex 1 to the report. Feedback from that consultation was reported at the meeting. This included some uncertainty regarding the race tickets that York Racecourse continued to offer to Lord Mayors after they had left office.

After a full discussion, the Chair expressed the Committee's appreciation for the input of the Lord Mayors and it was

Resolved: (i) That the following additional amendments be made to the draft guidance at Annex 1 to the report, in the section headed 'Hospitality':

- a) In the first bullet point, include a reference to functions held by 'significant partners of the council'.
- b) In the second bullet point, after 'such as lunch', insert 'or dinner'.

c) In the fourth bullet point, after 'where the Chief Executive', insert 'or appropriate officer'.

(ii) That officers make enquiries about the current policy on the receipt of race tickets and that discussions be held at the appropriate level with York Racecourse, with a view to limiting the gifting of race tickets to former members of the civic party to a period of one year after they have left office, and that the Chair be authorised to approve an addition to the guidance to that effect.

(iii) That, subject to those amendments, the draft guidance be approved for inclusion in the Civic Guide.

Reason: To ensure that members of the civic party are supported to make proper decisions about accepting gifts and hospitality.

### **36. Guidance for Elected Members during the Election Process**

Members considered a report which sought their views on the provision of guidance for Elected Members on their behaviour during the election process.

The draft guidance, attached as Annex 1 to the report, covered publicity and key considerations during the election period ('purdah'). The council's Communications team had been consulted on the draft and their suggested amendment to the third paragraph in the Publicity Rules section was reported at the meeting.

During their discussion, Members agreed on the need to highlight the guidance around the use of council resources.

Resolved: (i) That the draft guidance be approved and implemented ahead of the Local Elections in May 2019, subject to the addition of the following sentence to the end of the third paragraph of section 1:

*At all times, and particularly during the run up to purdah, the Council Communications team will remain impartial, providing information that meets*

*residents' needs and protecting the Council's reputation.*

(ii) That the amended guidance document be circulated to all Group Leaders, all Independent Members, all Parish Council clerks and the YLCA, drawing their attention to paragraph (c) of section 3 (Council resources, Headed Paper, Email Addresses).

Reason: To ensure that Elected Members receive guidance to assist them in the run up to the election.

### **37. Review of Work Plan**

Members were invited to consider the Committee's work plan for the next municipal year, 2019-20.

The Chair highlighted that this was the Committee's last meeting before the local elections and thanked all those who had served on it over the past four years.

Resolved: (i) That the City Council's Whistleblowing Policy be removed from the work plan and that a Task Group (comprising the Chair and Parish Councillors Chambers and Wiseman) be convened to consider the policy.

Reason: To ensure that the views of Joint Standards Members are fed into the process of reviewing this policy.

(ii) That further consideration of the work plan for 2019-20 be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee, after the local elections.

Reason: To enable the newly constituted Committee to put a planned programme of work in place.

Cllr C Runciman, Chair

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.05 pm.