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Meeting	Joint Standards Committee
Date	20 January 2021
Present	Councillors Rowley (Chair), Fisher, Baker, Carr and Douglas  Parish Councillors Chambers and Rawlings (Vice-Chair)  Ms Davies and Mr Laverick (Independent Persons)

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#### **66. Declarations of Interest**

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

#### **67. Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Annex B to Agenda Item 13 (Monitoring Report in Respect of Complaints Received), on the grounds that it contains information likely to reveal the identity of individuals, which is classed as exempt under Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

#### **68. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Committee held on 30 September 2020 be approved as a correct record, to be signed by the Chair at a later date.

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

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Assessment Sub-Committee held on 26

October 2020 be approved as a correct record, to be signed by the Chair at a later date.

**70. 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 in relation to Agenda Item 13, expressing concerns about a number of complaints she had made and stating that these had not been adequately dealt with by the Monitoring Officer.

**71. Draft Annual Report**

Members considered a report which provided an update on the committee's draft Annual Report for 2019/20.

As agreed at the last meeting of the Committee, on 30 September 2020, a draft Annual Report had been prepared for Members' consideration; this was attached as Annex A to the report.

- Resolved: (i) That the draft Annual Report at Annex A be approved for submission to a future meeting of Full Council, subject to amendments to:
- include Parish Cllr Wiseman's first name in the first paragraph and the second bullet-pointed list under 'Membership of the Committee';
  - include the total number of complaints received in the first paragraph under 'Complaints';
  - remove the superfluous 'e' from the first paragraph on the final page.
- (ii) That preparation of the next Annual Report be included in the committee's work plan, with members to send any suggestions for inclusion in the Report to the Chair and Vice Chair.

Reason: To enable the committee to meet its obligation to report annually to Council.

## **72. Update on Model Code of Conduct**

Members considered a report which provided an update on the Model Code of Conduct.

The final Model Code of Conduct approved by the Local Government Association (LGA) in December 2020 was attached as Annex A to the report. The next step was for the LGA to issue guidance based on key areas suggested during the consultation process.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that no guidance was currently available on how and when the Code would be implemented and suggested that this be kept as a 'floating' item on the work plan pending receipt of additional information from the LGA.

Resolved: That the update from the LGA be noted and a further update be brought to the committee in due course.

## **73. Member Development**

Members considered a report which invited them to discuss Member Development as part of review being carried out on the training provided to City of York Council Members.

Members discussed the training topics suggested in the report, namely; Licensing, Planning, Standards, Information Governance, Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting. They drew attention to other potential topics and areas of concern, including chairing skills, computer systems, casework, the quality of induction training for new Members, the regularity of refresher training and the need to maintain accurate training records.

Resolved: (i) That the Chair and Vice-Chair compile a list of 4-5 questions aimed at canvassing the opinions of Council Members on Member Development and Training, including potential platforms for delivery and areas in which training could be mandatory.

(ii) That the questions be circulated to committee members for comment before they are shared with Group Leaders as part of the review.

(iii) That an update report be brought to a future meeting.

Reason: To help improve the training and development provided to Council Members.

#### **74. Update on International Travel Protocol**

Members considered a report which provided an update on the International Travel Protocol, as requested at the last meeting, on 30 September 2020.

Members' views were sought on an updated version of the draft Protocol, attached at Annex A to the report, before its presentation to Audit & Governance Committee and then Full Council.

During their discussion, Members pointed out a typographical error in the first paragraph and commented that the Protocol should:

- clarify the payment of expenses during any trip (room service, drinks etc.);
- aim to minimise travel by air, given the council's commitment to carbon reduction;
- be clear that international travel will only be funded in exceptional circumstances;
- include a requirement to state who is paying for the travel if it is not paid for by the Council.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted and the protocol be amended to take account of Members' comments.

(ii) That the final version of the draft Protocol be brought to the next meeting, on 31 March.

Reason: To ensure that the committee's views are taken into account.

#### **75. Update on Parish Council Membership**

Members received a report which updated them on the steps taken to fill the current Parish vacancy on the committee.

The Yorkshire Local Councils Association was conducting the ballot on behalf of the council. The closing date for nominations

from parish and town councils was 22 January 2021. If a ballot was required, this would take place in February.

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that they would be happy to attend parish council meetings in order to build links and assist in interpreting codes of conduct.

Resolved: That the update on the steps being taken in order to ensure that full membership of the Joint Standards Committee is maintained be noted.

#### **76. Review of Work Plan for 2020/21**

Members considered the committee's work plan for the current municipal year.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved subject to the following additions to the meeting on 31 March 2021:

- Member Development
- Draft Annual Report 2020/21
- International Travel Protocol

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

#### **77. Monitoring Report in respect of Complaints Received**

Members considered a report which provided an update on the current position of ongoing complaints.

An anonymised list of complaints was attached as Annex A to the report. Further details of these were provided in an exempt list at Annex B. Discussion of the latter took place in private session.

Members noted the high proportion of complaints on the list made by parish councillors against one another and discussed how this might be addressed. Officers confirmed that such complaints were not consistent with the primary purpose of the Code of Conduct. With regard to comments made under Public Participation, officers stated that the complaints referred to had been dealt with and moved to the closed list that was available to Members on request.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That future reports to the committee include a list of closed cases for the past 12 months, to be updated on a rolling basis.

Reason: To ensure that the committee maintains an overview of complaints cases that have been dealt with.

Cllr M Rowley, Chair

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.56 pm.