



Standards Committee

Date: 5 June 2018
Time: 6.15 pm
Venue: Committee Room 1
District Council Offices, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe Bucks

Membership

Chairman Councillor C Etholen
Vice Chairman Councillor M Clarke

Councillors: K Ahmed, D J Carroll, A R Green, R Newman, S Saddique and J A Savage

Independent Persons (Observers): Mr G Houalla

Parish Council Observers: Parish Councillor Mr A Cobden, Mr T Nolan and Mrs H Stearn

Standing Deputies

Councillors: A D Collingwood, H L McCarthy, R Raja and R J Scott

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Agenda

Item		Page
1	Apologies for Absence To receive any apologies for absence.	-
2	Declarations of Interest To receive any disclosure of any pecuniary interests by Members relating to items on the agenda. If any Member is uncertain as to whether an interest should be disclosed, he or she is asked if possible, he or she is asked if possible to contact the District Solicitor prior to the meeting.	-

Standards Committee Minutes

Date: 20 March 2018

Time: 6.00 - 6.55 pm

PRESENT: Councillor C Etholen (in the Chair)

Councillor K Ahmed, Parish Councillor Mr A Cobden, Councillor A R Green, G Houalla, Councillor R Newman, Nolan and Councillor J A Savage, Councillor A D Collingwood and Councillor H L McCarthy

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from M Clarke, D Carroll and Parish Councillor Mrs H Stearn (Hughenden Parish Council).

50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Parish Councillor Nolan declared at Item 9 of the agenda (Minute 57 below) that he was a member of Lane End Parish Council and was aware of the subject matter of the complaint reported in that item.

51 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 9 January 2018 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

52 INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE – REVIEW BY THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

A report was submitted which requested that a review undertaken by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) be noted. The review was available at the link on page 8 of the Agenda.

The report stated that the CSPL published its review on Intimidation in Public Life in December 2017 with its findings and recommendations set out within the review. The recommendations included a variety of provisions, summarised below:

- social media companies taking greater responsibility to remove illegal material appearing on their sites;
- political parties and their leaders exercising a greater duty of care towards candidates members and supporters and taking action to address unacceptable intimidation by demonstrating leadership in accordance with the Nolan Principles;

- the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should produce accessible guidance for Parliamentary candidates giving clear advice on behaviour they may encounter which could be a criminal offence, and how to react to it;
- Government holding a consultation on a potential new electoral offence of intimidating candidates, and legislate to remove the requirement for local candidates to have their addresses published on ballot papers and for Returning Officers not to have to disclose the home addresses of those attending election counts;
- MPs to co-operate with the Police to address security threats;
- the NPCC to ensure local forces are properly trained to effectively investigate social media offences and work with the CPS to produce guidance on behaviour encountered in campaigning and identify criminal behaviour and act accordingly;
- for all in public life to uphold the highest standards of conduct, refraining from highly personalised attacks and reporting intimidatory behaviour;
- Press regulation bodies to have a code of conduct discouraging unacceptable language likely to incite intimidation and only use stories from journalists who subscribe to the same code; and
- for Council Monitoring Officers to highlight the circumstances in which the law allows certain sensitive information connected with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests to be withheld from publication.

It was noted that the Monitoring Officer had already actioned the final bullet point above by including an article in a recent edition of Members' Update.

The Monitoring Officer stated that the review had been driven by the CSPL's concern regarding intimidation in public life and the perceived threat to representative democracy in the UK. Members were requested to note the CSPL's interest in this issue nationally and that it would follow up progress on implementation of its recommendations.

In considering the report a Member disagreed with the recommendation seeking to change the law to address the issue of how candidate details were published. He felt that it was important for voters to be aware of addresses and to know if the candidates were also local residents. The Monitoring Officer indicated that the CSPL would be aware that a balance needed to be struck between democratic publicity and ensuring safety in public duties and life and that this recommendation was for Government to consider legislation, rather than an immediate change in the law.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

53 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

A report was submitted which asked Members to note that the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee would respond to the forthcoming consultation on Local Government Ethical Standards and that other stakeholders were invited to respond as well if they so wished.

The report stated that in January 2018 the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) published a stakeholder consultation on Local Government Ethical standards, with a response date of 18 May 2018. The range of consultation questions posed (attached at Appendix A of the report) related to such issues as the code of conduct for local Councillors, investigating and decisions on allegations, declaring interests and conflicts of interest, sanctions for Councillor misconduct, whistleblowing, improving standards, and intimidation of local councillors.

The meeting was informed that responses had been invited from local authorities, their Standards Committees, Monitoring Officers, parish and district councillors, Independent Persons and other stakeholders having an understanding and/or interest in local government.

A Member requested that the response to the consultation to be formulated by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee be circulated to the Standards Committee prior to being submitted. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that it would be.

RESOLVED: That

(i) the report be noted;

(ii) the final response to the consultation be circulated to the Committee prior to submission.

54 **PROTOCOL BETWEEN WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND THAMES VALLEY POLICE**

A report was considered which explained the proposed protocol between WDC and Thames Valley Police (TVP) to be applied to situations where a need may arise for referral of a complaint regarding a Councillor's conduct to the Police, because of a possible offence under the Localism Act 2011.

The draft protocol was attached as an appendix to the report and approval was sought. Monitoring Officers across Buckinghamshire had liaised with TVP and agreed the document in principle.

A Member enquired as to what would have happened if such an eventuality had arisen, in absence of the protocol and was informed that the action taken would have been in line with the proposed protocol.

Another Member expressed concern that the Protocol did not extend far enough, and that in its current form was too narrow and should address instances of all criminal offences, not just Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests.

The Monitoring Officer acknowledged the possibility of instances of other criminal activity arising and confirmed that a wider encompassing protocol would need to be formulated in consultation with the Police.

RESOLVED: That the draft protocol be approved.

55 INDEPENDENT PERSON APPOINTMENTS

A report was submitted which sought approval of further steps to recruit to the role of an Independent Person to serve on the Committee following the death of one of the Independent Persons, creating a vacancy which needed to be filled.

Members were informed that the vacancy had been advertised but regrettably no applications for the role had been received. Subsequently the Monitoring Officer had been in contact with colleagues across Buckinghamshire in an attempt to fill the role. Buckinghamshire County Council has also been currently undertaking a recruitment exercise for a single vacancy, with three candidates under consideration and an appointment imminent for the single vacancy. At least one BCC candidate has expressed interest in applying for the Wycombe role.

The Monitoring Officer also noted that whilst the term of office of the existing Independent Person was not time limited he had indicated his willingness to serve for the next 5 years. Once the vacancy had been recruited to, the Council recommendation would also include re-confirmation of his current appointment until May 2023.

It was confirmed that a further report would be presented to the June meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That;

- (i) The report be noted;
- (ii) Further steps as set out in the report to recruit to the vacancy be approved.

56 ANNUAL REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2017/18 was submitted for approval which was attached as an appendix to the report. Whilst full Council approval was not required, the report would be included within the minutes to be noted by Full Council in the usual way.

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that the proposed Annual Report had taken into account the format of the previous annual reports which had been submitted to Council prior to the standards regime being changed in 2012. Annual reports had been discontinued under the replacement provisions enacted by the Localism Act 2011. However, in October 2017 the Standards Committee had followed the recommendation of the Audit Committee that this practice be reinstated in accordance with CIPFA guidance.

Members debated the layout and format of the Standards complaints listed at page 34 of the agenda. One member asked whether it may be advisable to include a reference to the right to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act should the public wish to have more details on an individual complainant/complaint. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this format was commensurate with that

adopted by most Standards Committees, striking a balance between publishing sufficient information about complaints whilst not divulging any confidential information. Including specific details about FOIA rights in this context could unrealistically raise public expectations that more information would be disclosable on request, when in fact based on the current law it may not be possible to publicly disclose more information about individual complaints. The Monitoring Officer therefore advised against this.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) The Annual Report of the Standards Committee to be approved.

57 QUARTERLY UPDATE ON STANDARDS COMPLAINTS

Parish Councillor Mr Nolan declared he was a Lane End Parish Councillor, and was aware of the complaint under consideration.

The quarterly update on standards complaints was considered. This provided an overview of complaints received regarding member conduct since January 2018.

The report stated that since the last report the only outstanding complaint which was then at stage 1 had now been completed as set out in the attached appendix to the report. It was also confirmed that another prospective complaint had been subsequently received, but that the complainant had been advised that as the complaint was substantially on the same issue it would not be taken forward for investigation. Therefore the matter was not pursued any further by the complainant and was not included in the list in the appendix.

At the present time there were no additional outstanding complaints.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Iram Malik - Democratic Services Officer
Julie Openshaw - District Solicitor

Agenda Item 4

Standards Committee 5 June 2018

INDEPENDENT PERSON APPOINTMENTS

Officer contact: Julie Openshaw District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer 01494 421252 julie.openshaw@wycombe.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

PROPOSED DECISION and RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL

- i) To note progress with regard to recruitment;
- ii) To recommend to full Council
 - a. that Mr Christopher Morley be appointed to the role of Independent Person under the Localism Act 2011 until 12 May 2023
 - b. that the term of office of Mr Gilbert Houalla as Independent Person under the Localism Act 2011 be re-confirmed until 12 May 2023.

Reason for Decision

The recent death of one of the Independent Persons in December 2017 created a vacancy which needs to be filled.

Corporate Implications

1. The Localism Act 2011 created a revised method of addressing standards and ethics issues in local authorities. Wycombe District Council has been operating under this regime since it was introduced in July 2012. Section 27 places a duty on the Council to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council. Section 28(7) places a duty on the Council to appoint at least one "Independent Person" in connection with its standards duties. In accordance with widespread practice, WDC has decided to have two Independent Persons.
2. Following a transitional period during which two of the former "Independent Members" filled the roles of "Independent Person" ("IP") for the first year of the new regime (as the law permitted), Mr Gilbert Houalla and Mr Michael Pearce were appointed as the Council's two new IPs on 13th May 2013. Mr Pearce's death created a vacancy.
3. IPs need no specific qualifications but the attributes and experience they are expected to possess have been set out in an application pack, together with the grounds which would disqualify an applicant from being appointed. Appointments must be approved by a majority of members of the Council, which means full Council must make the final decision.
4. Many Councils pay a modest allowance to their IPs; WDC provides an annual allowance of £211.10 which is uplifted to reflect annual inflation, with no separate travel allowance.

Executive Summary

5. Reports were presented to Standards Committee on 9 January and 20 March, outlining recruitment steps to appoint a second Independent Person; this report provides a further update and recommends a candidate for approval by full Council for a period of 5 years, and re-confirmation of the appointment of the existing Independent Person for the same period.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

6. Having both Independent Person roles filled supports the Council's priorities in its Corporate Plan by helping to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and principles of good governance.

Background and Issues

7. WDC has decided to have two Independent Persons (IPs), and Mr Gilbert Houalla and Mr Michael Pearce were appointed as the Council's two new IPs on 13th May 2013. The death of Mr Pearce created a vacancy in one of the roles.
8. The legislation requires a minimum of one Independent Person to be appointed, but many Councils choose to appoint at least two, in order to provide some resilience, prevent the whole of the necessary support falling to a single person, and allow for the various facets of the role, as outlined below, to be covered.
9. The role of the IPs was initially twofold, i.e. to provide a view to the Council (in practice to the Monitoring Officer) which must be taken into account before a decision is made on whether or not to formally investigate a complaint that a member has breached the Code of Conduct or in more general circumstances in relation to an allegation, and for members who are the subject of a complaint to be able to contact an IP in relation to an allegation. Since the role was initially enacted, the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 came into force on 11 May 2015, providing that if a Council was considering dismissal of one or more of its statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer, or Monitoring Officer) it would have to set up a panel and at least two IPs would need to be members of such panel. So far there will have been few if any cases across the country where this third aspect of the role will have been required.
10. As approved by Committee on 9 January 2018, the vacancy was advertised through the recruitment pack being placed on the Council's website (a newspaper advertisement is not a legal obligation so was not placed in accordance with debate at Committee on 9 January) and although two potential candidates enquired about the role, unfortunately no applications were received at that point by the closing date. Subsequently the Monitoring Officer contacted colleagues across Buckinghamshire to enquire if they may be aware of any suitable candidates who may be interested in the role with WDC. Ultimately two applicants applied, so there was no need to further advertise the role. Both candidates completed application forms and have been interviewed by an interview panel comprised of the Monitoring Officer and Chairman of the Standards Committee. Both applicants have had very extensive experience in the relevant categories, both performed well in interview and both were considered to be appointable. However, on balance it was agreed by the interview panel that one of the candidates met the criteria originally more closely. Two referees have

provided very positive references. Accordingly, this candidate is recommended to be approved as an Independent Person for WDC until 12 May 2023.

11. In 2013, no defined term was placed by WDC upon the appointments so they were indefinite; there is no legal obligation to have a fixed term. Some Councils chose to appoint for fixed terms of 5 years to try to minimise any risk that over time it could be perceived that IPs' impartiality might be compromised by an ongoing working relationship with their appointing Council, but some of these have subsequently found little option on expiry of the initial 5 years than to re-appoint the same people due to difficulties in finding further candidates. The 5th anniversary of Mr Houalla's appointment occurred in May 2018. As he has indicated his willingness to continue his term for a further 5 years, it is also recommended that full Council re-confirm approval of Mr Houalla's appointment until at least 12 May 2023.

Options

12. The Council needs to have at least two Independent Persons in the longer term, so the vacancy needs to be filled. Another candidate could be selected but as set out above the interview panel's view is that the recommended candidate is preferred.

Next Steps

13. Following recommendation from Standards Committee, full Council will be invited to confirm the appointments at its next meeting on 16 July.

Background Papers

None.

Agenda Item 5

Standards Committee 5 June 2018

MODERN SLAVERY TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT - REVIEW

Officer contact: Julie Openshaw District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer 01494 421252 julie.openshaw@wycombe.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

PROPOSED DECISION AND RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

To approve the attached reviewed Statement and recommend to Council that it supports its publication.

Reason for Decision

Preparation and publication of a voluntary Statement will continue to evidence that the Council takes seriously its role in preventing modern slavery, and has put in place robust steps to prevent it.

Corporate Implications

1. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 came into force on 26 March 2015 and is aimed at preventing slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking, and protecting victims and it sets up an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. A key provision in Section 54 places larger commercial organisations under a duty to publish a “slavery and human trafficking statement” (referred to in this report as the Statement) for each financial year of its organisation. Larger commercial organisations are defined as those who have a turnover in excess of £36 million. These Statements set out the steps the organisation has taken during the financial year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains and in any part of its own business, or that it has not taken any such steps.
2. Although this statutory duty does not apply to the Council, and this has been confirmed by the Anti-Slavery Commissioner’s Office, the nature of the Council’s business makes it good practice to publish a voluntary Statement to show that it is serious about playing an important role in preventing slavery servitude and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. A Statement was approved by Standards Committee on 8 February 2017 and its publication was supported by Council. The Statement has now been reviewed.

Executive Summary

3. This report sets out the reasoning for continuing to publish a voluntary Statement setting out the steps the Council takes to seek to prevent slavery and human trafficking being involved in its supply chains and invites the support of the Standards Committee.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

4. Publication of a voluntary statement helps support the Council's Corporate Plan, particularly its Cohesive Communities priority and its commitment to good governance as set out therein.

Background and Issues

5. As set out above, the Modern Slavery Act places a duty on larger commercial organisations to publish annual Statements setting out what if any steps have been taken to seek to prevent slavery and human trafficking.
The legislation provides that Statements can include information about:
 - The organisation's structure, its business and its supply chains;
 - Its policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking;
 - Its due diligence processes in relation to slavery and human trafficking and its business and supply chains;
 - The part of its business and supply chains where there is a risk of slavery and human trafficking taking place and the steps it has taken to assess and manage that risk;
 - Its effectiveness in ensuring that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in its business or supply chains, measured against such performance indicators as it considers appropriate;
 - The training about slavery and human trafficking available to its staff.
6. In September 2016, the then Corporate Governance Group, made up of senior officers, considered the principle of a voluntary Statement, and concluded that whilst at that time only one other local authority was known at this stage to have voluntarily published such a statement (East Lindsey DC) it would be good practice to do so, as the Council should be taking a firm stance on this issue, has a number of ways in which it actively seeks to ensure such preventative work in in place, and that drawing together the steps taken in order to prepare a Statement would be a relatively straightforward process, and would provide evidence of the Council's commitment in this area. The Home Office has led on tackling modern slavery and encouraging organisations to work together effectively to combat it, and it will be no surprise if future legislation makes the publication of such statements, or some similar arrangement, mandatory.
7. In November 2016, Standards Committee confirmed its support for the principle of a Statement, and expressed the view that following its own approval, full Council should also be invited to support it. Work has been ongoing to prepare the Statement and input from officers working on procurement, HR, fraud prevention and the partnership work done by the Communities and Environment teams has been included.
8. Whilst the Standards Committee's terms of reference do not require it to formally authorise the publication of such a statement, its support as the Committee with general responsibility for standards of conduct underpins the Council's strong corporate commitment to eradicating slavery and trafficking.
9. The revised Statement is attached as Appendix 1. Officers involved in the services covered in the Statement have been consulted. Minor changes

reflect the fact that as well as being an employer, WDC is also the procurer/commissioner of services, that there is a declaration of interest system in place for employees as well as elected members, and that whilst Audit Committee as well as Standards Committee was initially anticipated to take part in the annual review, this has not yet occurred, but other committees can become involved if necessary. The fact that the Council no longer has a managed service contract in place for agency staff is also reflected. In terms of how complaints officers can help to identify possible issues from complaints received, and handle them appropriately, additional training has been requested and will be provided.

Conclusion

10. Preparation publication and review of the Statement will evidence that whilst no Statement or systems can ever completely mitigate the risk of these practices coming to light, the Council continues to take seriously its role in preventing modern slavery, and has put in place steps which are as robust as possible to prevent it.

Next Steps

11. Following full Council's support, the Statement will be finalised and published and a further review will take place next year.

Background Papers

None.

Agenda Item 5

Wycombe District Council

Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement 2017/18

This Statement sets out the actions of Wycombe District Council (“WDC”) to understand potential modern slavery risks related to its business and the steps it has taken that are aimed at ensuring that there is no slavery or human trafficking in its own business or its supply chains. This statement relates to actions and activities during the financial year 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018.

As part of Local Government, the Council recognises that it has a responsibility to take a robust approach to preventing slavery, exploitation and / or human trafficking in all its forms. Modern slavery in its wider sense is commonly accepted to include forced or bonded labour, human trafficking, child slavery, anything involving offences under the Protection of Children Act 1978 or the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and forced or early marriage. Whilst at the present time the Council is publishing this statement on a voluntary basis rather than under a statutory duty, it does so recognising that this is good practice as a public authority. The Council also recognises its responsibilities as an employer, and procurer/commissioner of services and acknowledges its duties as a District Council to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of slavery or human trafficking as introduced by section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and to take action and work with other responder agencies under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The Council is absolutely committed to doing all it can to prevent slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities and to ensuring that its supply chains are free from slavery and/or human trafficking. The statement below sets out practices already in place at the Council in 2017/18 following the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Organisational Structure

This statement covers the activities of WDC across its Organisational Structure.

Corporate Strategy

The Council’s Corporate Strategy clearly states its aim to support and develop the people it employs, growing their knowledge and skills, now and for the future. The Council’s Workforce Strategy, referred to below, explains how it does this.

Workforce Strategy

The Workforce Strategy is reviewed bi-annually (and its action plans annually) so that it stays relevant. The Strategy is supported by other policies, available on the Council’s Intranet, which are also regularly reviewed.

The Workforce Strategy has 5 themes, each with a supporting plan:

- 1) Organisational Development
- 2) Leadership Development

- 3) Skills Development
- 4) Recruitment and Retention
- 5) Pay and Rewards

Policies

The Council has a robust ongoing Policy Review Programme which has input from Employees, Team Leaders, Management Team, HR, Trade Union and Members. The Policy Review Programme is an ongoing key piece of work in the HR work plan to ensure that the Council's policies and procedures remain compliant and fit for purpose.

The following policies and procedures are considered to be key in meeting the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act.

Employee Code of Conduct

The Council's Employee Code of Conduct has been reviewed in 2015/16 and makes clear to employees the actions and behaviours expected of them when representing the Council. The Council strives to maintain the highest standards of employee conduct and ethical behaviour and breaches are investigated. The Council has a process in place for employees to make declaration of outside interests where appropriate including other paid employment.

Recruitment

The Council's recruitment processes are transparent and reviewed regularly. This includes robust procedures in place for the vetting of new employees and ensures they are able to confirm their identities and qualifications, and they are paid directly into an appropriate, personal bank account.

Agency Workers

Where the need arises to source resources from agencies, the Council will verify the practices of any agency it is using before accepting workers from that agency.

Pay

The Council through its HR policies ensures that all employees are paid fairly and equitably.

Our Due Diligence Processes for Slavery and Human Trafficking: Employees

Recruitment systems are in place to prevent forced labour. Processes are in place for employees to report any concerns on human rights.

In this connection, "forced labour" is defined as all work and service which is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered her / himself voluntarily.

Whistleblowing

The Council publishes its “Whistle Blowing” Confidential Reporting Policy as part of its Constitution. This encourages all its employees, and others the Council deals with who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Council’s work to come forward and voice their concerns, and lays out a process for doing so, which complies with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 so that if necessary employees may make disclosures, without fear of reprisal or victimisation.

Corporate Complaints system

The Council operates a complaints procedure to deal with complaints about its services, and this can be used to report community concerns such as overcrowding or issues which might reveal slavery or trafficking and which merit investigation or reporting to a partner agency.

Councillors Code of Conduct

The Council expects all Councillors to demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and behaviour. All Councillors are required to abide by a formal Member Code of Conduct. Allegations of breaches are initially handled by the Monitoring Officer. Both the Code and Complaints Process are in the Council’s Constitution.

Councillors Declarations of Interests

The Member Code of Conduct expects all Councillors to record and declare both Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, and Non-Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

Councillors Induction and Training

Councillors complete induction training on election, including mandatory equality and diversity training. Update training is also provided where appropriate.

Safeguarding

The Council embraces its responsibility to develop, implement and monitor policies and procedures to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm. The Council has a comprehensive policy which all staff and councillors are expected to read and work within. The Council works within multi-agency partnerships to protect and safeguard people.

Training

The Council has a programme of mandatory training that all relevant employees and members must complete, including Safeguarding Awareness Training. Training enables officers in community-facing and regulatory roles to look out for, identify and report incidents of abuse and neglect, including modern slavery and trafficking to the relevant agencies.

Contractors and Service Providers

Where the Council awards a new contract for goods services or works in which there is a significant risk of modern slavery abuse the Council will seek reassurance that the Contractor has policies, procedures and training in place to detect and deter such abuse. The Council is also adding a whistleblowing clause to its standard terms and conditions in Contracts. Modern slavery does not occur in a vacuum and often it is orchestrated by organised crime groups. The Council therefore reserves the right to include enhanced probity checks / requirements at both the selection and award stages of procurement procedures, to ensure there no possibility of infiltration by these groups. The Council will work with central government and other organisations to keep abreast of and comply with best practice in its procurement arrangements.

Partnership Working

The Council works in partnership with a wide range of agencies with the aim of preventing abuse from taking place and where it is detected, to report via approved channels the instances of neglect and abuse and to support victims.

Emergency Planning

The Council has a duty to be part of the multi-agency response to the investigations into modern slavery and trafficking by providing assistance to victims (including facilitating and staffing the place of safety) when they are taken to such a place during these investigations.

This statement has been approved by the Council's Standards Committee and is supported by Full Council, and will be reviewed and updated annually.

The Statement and any actions included with it will be reported to the Standards Committee and where appropriate other committees each year for monitoring and assurance purposes.

Katrina Wood
Leader

Karen Satterford
Chief Executive
[date] 2018

Agenda Item 6

Standards Committee 5 June 2018

Training at Bucks & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils Conference April 2018

Officer contact: Julie Openshaw District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer 01494 421252 julie.openshaw@wycombe.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

PROPOSED DECISION

To note the presentation given to the Bucks and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils Conference on 19 April 2018.

Reason for Decision

To inform Standards Committee of training provided to Town and Parish councils.

Corporate Implications

1. The Localism Act requires WDC to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and co-opted members, and Standards Committee's terms of reference include advising, training or arrange the training of Members and Co-opted Members of the District Council on matters relating to the authority's Code of Conduct. Standards Committee has an important role to play in the latter stages of conduct complaints against Parish and Town members as well as District Members, and therefore a role in encouraging good standards of behaviour to keep breaches of the Code of Conduct to a minimum.
2. The Monitoring Officer's wider role includes generally helping to support high standards of conduct and supporting ways in which this can be done. Parish and Town councils within Wycombe District are members of B&MKALC and its 2018 Conference has relevance for those authorities as well as others across the wider Buckinghamshire area.

Executive Summary

3. This report informs members of training provided designed to promote good working relationships, and therefore good conduct, within Buckinghamshire including WDC's district.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

4. Supporting good conduct helps to promote the Council's commitment in the Corporate Plan to ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and principles of good governance.

Background and Issues

5. On 19 April 2018 on the invitation of the Bucks & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils County Officer, the District Solicitor/Monitoring Officer addressed the Bucks & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (B&MKALC)

Conference on Respect, Trust and Working Relationships, which had been arranged by B&MKALC with the intention of promoting good working relationships in town and parish councils belonging to B&MKALC. The topic covered was the Role of the Monitoring Officer and the Code of Conduct. B&MKALC of course includes within its membership town and parish councils from within WDC's area. Particular aspects of the topic covered included:

- how current Codes of Conduct for members have arisen historically;
- the role of the Monitoring Officer, both generally and specifically with regard to member conduct complaints handling;
- the role of the Independent Persons within that framework;
- declarations of interest;
- declarations of gifts and hospitality;
- sanctions for breach of the Code, and
- the complaints process.

Two particularly key areas emphasised were the importance of the Nolan Principles, which continue to underpin concepts of good and ethical behaviour and remain the cornerstone of the language used in Codes of Conduct locally, and key areas of conduct to focus upon. Copies of the presentation can be circulated to members.

6. Other main speakers at the event and the topics they covered were:

- Paul Hoey of Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd – Dealing with Difficult Situations
- Jonathan Owen - CEO of NALC (National Association of Local Councils) - The National Landscape
- Rob Smith – Chief Executive of SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) - Standards and Behaviour from the Clerk's Perspective
- Vicky Jacomb – Came and Company – Insurance policy implications for problematic behaviour.

7. Carole Burslem of B&MKALC has fed back that overall the conference was received very positively and attendees considered that it had had a helpful effect in promoting understanding and informing town and parish members in accordance with the aims of the conference.

Options

8. None, the report is for noting only.

Next Steps

9. Standards Committee will continue to monitor standards and ethics training provided as part of its terms of reference.

Background Papers

None.

Agenda Item 7

Standards Committee 5 June 2018

QUARTERLY UPDATE ON STANDARDS COMPLAINTS

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Wards affected: All.

PROPOSED DECISION

To note the report.

Reason for Decision

To provide the Committee with an overview of complaints about member conduct since 20 March 2018.

Corporate Implications

1. The Localism Act 2011, Sections 26-37 and the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 set out the current legislative framework relating to standards of conduct for elected members and arrangements for handling standards complaints. The Member Code of Conduct and complaints procedure are included in Part 5 of the Council's published Constitution.
2. In order to enable Standards Committee to maintain an over view of complaints and any trends emerging, reports will be presented quarterly.

Executive Summary

3. This report provides Standards Committee with an overview of recent Member conduct complaint cases.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

4. None.

Background and Issues

5. Standards Committee is presented with quarterly updates on member conduct complaints.
6. Since the report to Committee on 20 March 2018, at which time there were no outstanding complaints, there remain no outstanding reports, although at the time of compiling this report, one new complaint is anticipated. Progress will be reported at the next meeting.

Options

7. None, this report is for noting only.

Conclusions

8. As with recent reports, there continues to be overall a relatively small number of complaints, and so far none have been referred for investigation. The involvement of the view of an Independent Person in each decision, as required by the legal framework, provides a valuable check and balance to the Monitoring Officer to ensure decisions made at Stage 2, i.e. whether or not a formal investigation should be carried out into a complaint, are proportionate and reasonable. The Annual Report of Standards Committee to full Council will also continue to provide an additional composite overview of complaints recently handled.

Next Steps

9. Further quarterly updates will be provided.

Background Papers

None.