

## Public Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5 November 2024 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Barry Johnson (Vice-Chair), Deborah Arnold, John Fox, Martin Kerin, Sue Shinnick and Lee Watson (Substitute) (substitute for Cathy Kent)

Charles Clarke, Co-Opted Member  
Jasdip Singh Nijjar, Co-Opted Member

**Apologies:** Councillor Cathy Kent

**In attendance:** Daniel Fenwick, Executive Director Corporate Services/Monitoring Officer  
Helen Nicol, Assistant Director Legal and Governance  
Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair, Councillor Barry Johnson chaired the meeting.

### **7. Minutes**

The minutes of the Standard Committee held on the 16 July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

### **8. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **9. Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **10. Member Training and Development Update**

The report presented set out the feedback and review of the refreshed training schedule as well as highlighting additional activities to enhance the offer both in year and for the future. The committee were asked to review and comment on the Member attendance and feedback received from training sessions so far in 2024/25.

The following members spoke on this item – Councillors D Arnold, Johnson, L Watson, Fox and Shinnick. The following comments were made:

- Understand the reason why some members did not engage in the training process.
- Agreed the standard of training had improved.
- More intermediate/advanced training for longer standing members.
- Training should not be just for new members.
- As a new member had found the training excellent and very informative.
- Noted the importance of new members attending as many training sessions as possible to understand the process.
- Agreed more use should be made of courses being offered by LGA.
- More interactive training sessions rather than PowerPoint.
- Agreed attending training takes a lot of time out of members busy schedules.
- Suggested away sessions, possibly overnight, to spend more quality time learning.
- Agreed that non-Thurrock officers should present the training.
- It was recognised that member training could be more interactive to engage more members and to get the training requirement balance right.
- Comments were noted and would be looked into especially as part of the member induction.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. Noted the attendance figures and feedback provided for sessions so far and make any recommendations in relation to increasing or improving engagement or delivery of sessions.**
- 2. That the Committee supported the drafting of a schedule of attendees for experienced Members to attend the LGA Leadership Academy in future years. This schedule be cross-party.**

### **11. Update on review of councillor conduct sections of the Constitution**

The report presented set out the initial findings of a review of the code of conduct and the complaints procedure to handle complaints under the code.

The following members spoke on this item – Councillors D Arnold, Johnson and co-opted members Charles Clarke and Nijjar Jasdip Singh. The following comments were made:

- Questioned why reports on complaints were still being printed on pink paper when the council was trying to be more open and transparent.
- Noted that when complaints were received they were allegations until proven and was at the interest of those parties for this information to remain confidential.
- Noted the lengthy process and whether the format could be changed to speed this up.
- Questioned if it would be possible to note how many attempts had been made to set up meetings with individual complainants and to potentially build a limit into how many offers of a meeting were given.

- Whether there was a maximum cut of time between the complaint being received and completion.
- Debate took place on whether any breaches to code of conduct should be brought to full council for discussion rather than the Advisory Panel making that decision.
- Members discussed whether the chair of the Advisory Panel should be an external body.

## **RESOLVED**

**The committee recommended to:**

- 1. Considered and agreed the proposal not to amend the Council's Code of Conduct.**
  - 2. Noted the comments in respect of the Code of Conduct complaints procedure and agreed to receive a report at the next meeting for consultation.**
  - 3. Agreed the complaint process table as set out at Appendix 1, which the Monitoring Officer would adopt into the current constitution (pursuant to his powers to do so) in advance of the constitution review to assist with clarity on processing complaints.**
- 12. Sensitive Members Interests - Employment Information and the register of interests**

The report presented set out the rationale for not including within the public register of members' interest details of the Employment Office, Trade, Profession or Vocation of any member, unless a member specifically requests that they would like such information to be public.

There were no questions from members.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. Agreed the guidance note of the Monitoring Officer in relation to the exclusion or disclosure of sensitive member interests (relating to members' employment office, trade, profession or vocation), as set out in appendix 1.**
  - 2. Agreed, the guidance note be published on the Council's website to strengthen transparency and all members are written to by the Monitoring Officer to make them aware of the guidance.**
- 13. Ethical Framework Update**

The report presented provided an update to the committee on ethical compliance and conduct in Thurrock to help assess the ethical health of the authority. It covered the relevant reporting period (17 July 2024 to the 27

October 2024; the last Standards Committee being held on 16 July 2024, and publication of the agenda and reports for this Standards Committee being 28 October 2024): The report also covered information on the gifts and hospitality declared by Councillors; declarations of interest at meetings, new complaints received under the members' Code of Conduct and actions taken, together with details of any complaints concluded during the period and outcomes.

The meeting went into exempt session at 7.37pm.

The meeting convened into open session at 7.46pm.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. Noted and provided comment on the register of gifts and hospitality at Appendix 1.**
- 2. Noted and provided comment on the register of declarations of interest at Appendix 2.**
- 3. Noted and provided comment on Code of Conduct complaints received and concluded during the period, as set out in exempt Appendix 3.**

## **14. Work Programme**

The Constitution Review – Ethical Governance to be added to the 11 February 2025 meeting.

A full recording of this meeting can be viewed from the following link:

[Standards Committee - Tuesday 5 November 2024, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts](#)

**The meeting finished at 7.49 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**