

STANDARDS AND CONSTITUTIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 November 2018

Present:

Councillor B Mooney (Vice Chair)

Councillors	C Jones	J McManus
	A Davies	C Blakeley
	C Jones	T Cox
	B Kenny	G Ellis
	J McManus	P Gilchrist

Councillor B Mooney in the Chair.

13 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Chris Blakeley told the Committee that he had received notice from Councillor Tony Cox informing that he may be a few minutes late in arriving due to traffic problems experienced in Liverpool. No other apologies were received.

14 **MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

15 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee held on 12 June 2018 and that the minutes of the special meetings held on 29 August and 7 November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

16 **MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDARDS PANEL AND STANDARDS APPEAL PANEL**

Vicki Shaw, Acting Senior Manager Legal and Committee Services reminded Members that at its meeting held on 29 August 2018 the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee had agreed membership of the Standards Panel and Standards Appeal Panel (Minute No. 10 refers). Members noted that although there were no outstanding matters, following the resignation of

Councillor McLaughlin from the Labour Group, a replacement member was required should the Panels be convened later in the Municipal Year.

Members noted that Councillor Brian Kenny had been appointed as the Labour Group Member of the Standards Appeal Panel, and, therefore, no additional appointment was required.

It was moved by Councillor Chris Jones and seconded by Councillor Julie McManus that Councillor Bernie Mooney be appointed to the Standards Panel.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Bernie Mooney be appointed to the Standards Panel.

17 **ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS**

Vicki Shaw, Acting Senior Manager Legal and Committee Services introduced a report of the Monitoring Officer that provided a summary of standards complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct and Protocol for dealing with complaints against Members between 1 June 2017 and 31 October 2018. An updated appendix had been circulated to Members that provided a summary of 19 complaints received from 15 complainants in relation to 13 Councillors during the reported period.

Ms Shaw informed that most matters had been dealt with by local resolution however two complaints had been upheld and dealt with either by the Standards Committee meeting as a whole, or by the Standards Panel. She added that the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Standards Panel were included as a separate item on the meeting agenda.

In response to a question from a Member, Ms Shaw provided explanation on the matter of confidentiality and the reasons why Members had not been named in the report, particularly in respect of complaints that had not been upheld.

A Member highlighted the matter of time taken when dealing with complaints and the amount of money spent, particularly when taking into account officer time. He added that given most serious complaints should be dealt with by the Police, Members should consider reviewing the existing Protocol to investigate costs and any actions that might be taken to address frivolous complaints.

Another Member suggested more involvement of Independent Members at an early stage and further suggested bringing people together in person rather than dealing with matters by way of correspondence could be a way to ensure costs were monitored and managed.

Ms Shaw advised the Committee that there was no provision for awarding costs in the arrangements for dealing with Standards Complaints, but she was currently re-drafting the protocol and would take Members' comments into account.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

18 **WEBCASTING OUT-TURN REPORT**

Vicki Shaw, Acting Senior Manager Legal and Committee Services introduced a report of the Director: Governance and Assurance (Monitoring Officer) that set out a number of options for the management of future 'high public interest' meetings of the Cabinet and the Council. The report also contained a draft information note to Officers and Members regarding the Webcasting Protocol, conduct of meetings and provided updated statistics regarding Council and Committee meetings that had been webcast between 14 May 2018 and 1 October 2018.

In addition, the report provided an update on the Webcasting Project, and a short summary of the feedback received from Members of the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee and from the Members' Equipment Steering Group regarding recent consultation concerning the webcasting of meetings, style of minutes and officer support at meetings.

Patrick Sebastian, who had acted as the Webcasting Project Manager updated Members on a number of points within the report, and responded to Members' questions on the matter of recording of votes.

A Member highlighted concerns that the proposed alterations to the Council Procedures, Standing Order 18 (Voting), (Appendix 3 to the report) was a substantial re-write and removed powers from Council and placed them in the hands of the Mayor. He felt this was unacceptable and moved that the matter be reviewed by the Director: Governance and Assurance and be brought back to this Committee for further review at the earliest opportunity. The Motion was seconded.

The Chair confirmed that whilst this matter was under review, the existing Standing Orders would apply for the December 2018 meeting of Council.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the options proposals and progress in respect of the Council's Webcasting Project be noted;**

(2) the draft Protocol and Guidance attached at Appendix 1 to the report be endorsed and circulated to all Councillors; and

(3) Standing Order 18 of the Council Procedure Rules (Voting) be brought back for further review at a special meeting of this Committee in January 2019.

19 STANDARDS PANEL MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Standards Panel meeting held on 9 October 2018 be received.