

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the on the 7 November 2023 at 7:30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Nicholas White (Chair), Wren (Vice-Chair), Allen, Evans, Groves, Lee and Sayer

ALSO PRESENT (Virtually): Councillors Moore, Chris Farr and Sue Farr

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Mr Shaun Mundy (Independent Person)

151. MONITORING OFFICER REPORT – 2022/23

The committee received a report that provided an overview of the work of the Monitoring Officer function between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023.

The report informed Members that:

- a second Deputy Monitoring Officer had been appointed to reduce work pressures and provide a quicker response to complaints received;
- a recruitment process for the position of the Standards Committee Independent Person was currently ongoing;
- thirteen councillor complaints, covering both Tandridge District Council and its parish councils, had been received during the reporting period.

In response to Member questions, the Monitoring Officer advised that:

- the Independent Person job specification was a public document which had been advertised on the Council's website and would be shared with the Committee for their information. The outcome of the interview process would be reported at the next committee meeting;
- there was no statutory limitation on Code of Conduct complaints;
- in comparison to other Surrey District and Boroughs it appeared that Member behaviour was good in Tandridge;
- the best way to improve standards would be for Members to discuss bad behaviour in their groups when it occurs or to report bad behaviour to the Monitoring Officer when it occurs. Members were also encouraged to attend training sessions when they are held;
- future Monitoring Officer reports would be amended to help the committee see if a District or Parish Councillor has reoccurring complaints against them;
- a report relating to the Member Officer Protocol would be brought to the next committee meeting and that the reporting of Councillor complaints made against Council Officers would be dealt with at that time.

RESOLVED – that the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report be noted.

152. REVIEW OF TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee received a report relating to a proposed revision of the process for appointing a Standards Hearing Panel contained in the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011.

In response to Member questions, it was confirmed that:

- the recent increase in the size of the Standards Committee would provide a larger number of councillors who could be selected to sit on a hearings panel;
- Standards training had been held at the beginning of the municipal year. Training would be provided on the hearing process after it has been necessary to appoint a panel and attendees had been confirmed.

RESOLVED – that Paragraph 11.1 of the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011 be amended to state the following:

“The Hearings Panel is a Sub-Committee of the Council's Standards Committee. It will be comprised of three District Councillors serving on the Standards Committee.”

Rising 7.54 pm