
Standards Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 24 September 2024 from 7.00 pm - 7.48 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney (Vice-Chair-in-the-Chair), Ann Cavanagh (substitute for Councillor Charlie Miller), Angela Harrison (substitute for Councillor Ashley Wise) James Hunt, Mark Last, Tom Nundy (substitute for Councillor Elliott Jayes), Richard Palmer and Tony Winckless.

Independent Person (non-voting): Mrs Patricia Richards.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Robin Harris, Jo Millard and Larissa Reed.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Hayden Brawn and Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Elliott Jayes, Rich Lehmann, Charlie Miller, Pete Neal, Hannah Perkin, Ashley Wise and KALC Representative Parish Councillor Jeff Tutt (non-voting).

269 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Vice-Chair-in-the-Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

270 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 November 2023 (Minutes No. 67 – 74) and the Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 11 July 2024 (Minute Nos. 435 – 441) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Vice-Chair-in-the-Chair as a correct record.

271 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

272 **Member Development Strategy**

The Chief Executive introduced the report which set out the Council's approach to Member training in the draft Member Development Strategy 2024 – 2027. She said the Strategy had been put together by the Member Development Working Group (MDWG) which had proposed that any independent Councillors also sat on the group, alongside a representative from each of the political groups as Member Development was important for all Members.

The Chief Executive explained that many of the actions in the Strategy already took place but some new initiatives such as holding separate induction sessions for new Councillors were included. She spoke positively about the support for Members via the 'buddy scheme' and highlighted the information on resourcing support and training for Members.

Finally, the Chief Executive drew attention to the Action Plan at Appendix C of the report which set out all the training and briefing sessions scheduled and already taken place, as suggested by the MDWG and officers, and she explained that it was a live document

and she expected further suggestions of training to come forward.

Members were invited to make comments which included:

- Suggested MDWG provided attendance statistics, including in-person and remote attendance;
- Members should be responsible for adding training and briefing sessions in their diaries and finding the time to attend;
- supported the Strategy;
- the 'buddy scheme' and all training received had been helpful;
- it was useful to have training sessions recorded and accessible at a time to suit;
- sought confirmation that Planning and Licensing training should be attended in person;
- suggested more regular evaluations of training, surveys and feedback and to consider alternative ways of receiving feedback;
- supported shadowing of officers and considered this should be publicised more;
- training sessions at 6pm might exclude working Councillors;
- there were many more training sessions than agreed in the timetable of meetings;
- The Member Handbook should be provided as soon as a Member was elected;
- suggested updating the wording on page 21 of the report;
- there was too much information to take in on induction day;
- those that needed training did not always attend;
- suggested an online log of training;
- suggested historic training be added to the action plan;
- feedback was the responsibility of Members;
- officers made the effort to run training so Members should attend; and
- suggested a link of where online training sessions could be accessed be circulated in the weekly Member communication email.

The Chief Executive explained that training needed to be relevant over the four years and the training plan was a live document. She said different learning styles needed to be offered and shadowing of staff at Swale Borough Council or adjoining authorities could be organised but Members needed to make the first approach. The Chief Executive highlighted that the survey which had been circulated to all Members earlier in the year had a less than 50% response rate but of those that who responded, 6pm mid-week sessions were the most preferred time slot. She reminded the Committee that training sessions were recorded to view back at any time.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager explained that in order to sit on Planning Committee, Members had to attend the training in person and it was preferable for Licensing training to take place in person as well so that Members were fully engaged and it was more beneficial. She explained that historically, training feedback forms were not always completed. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager acknowledged there were many more training sessions than agreed at Annual Council but training and briefing sessions were subject to need and demand. She explained that the Member Handbook was a live document, constantly updated, and could be viewed once a Member had access to the Member Teams Channel.

The Committee supported independent Members being represented on the MDWG.

Recommended:***(1) That the Member Development Strategy be adopted by Full Council.*****273 Code of Conduct Arrangements - verbal update**

The Monitoring Officer updated Members by advising that the Code of Conduct document had received no input or feedback and the original deadline for comments was 30 September 2024. During the discussion that followed the Chief Executive suggested a link to the document be circulated to all Members in their weekly communications email and those Members that wished to, could contact her to discuss.

Members agreed to extend the deadline for comments to 15 October 2024.

Resolved:***(1) That the verbal update be noted.***Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel