

COMMITTEE: STANDARDS

DATE: 21ST DECEMBER 2015
SUBJECT: MEDIA PROTOCOL
REPORT BY: PRESS & PR MANAGER
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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES	ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL	CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING	OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: NONE

PURPOSE

1. To allow the Committee to consider a suggested media protocol.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. **Standards Committee is recommended to consider and agree a protocol to govern how the Committee will manage media and press interest in code of conduct cases referred to it.**

BACKGROUND

3. Local councils are required to adopt a Code of Conduct that sets out the rules governing the behaviour of members. The Luton Borough Council Standards Committee has been established to deal with complaints, to investigate them and to rule on any breach and decide on sanction, where it has occurred.
4. By their nature, complaints against elected councillors can attract local – and in extreme cases national – press interest.

5. Following consultation with the Council's Monitoring Officer, the Chair of Standards Committee has requested that a draft protocol be developed to govern how media relations will be handled as complaints are made and the "rules of engagement" during - and at the conclusion of - investigations.

REPORT

6. A simple protocol for dealing with media interest in Code of Conduct and Standards investigations within the borough will support the effective and fair management of complaints.
7. It would be unfair on elected members if different media handling techniques were deployed every time a Code of Conduct complaint was made.
8. Like all authorities, Luton Borough Council has a statutory duty to publicise the outcome of a case. Notification normally includes any decision not to apply any sanction or where the investigation has found that there is no case to answer.
9. The only exception to the above may be when an elected member who has been found not to have breached the Code asks for a notice not to be published.
10. Amendments were suggested at the last meeting of the Committee and these have been incorporated in Appendix A

PROPOSAL/OPTION

10. The Committee can either adopt the suggested protocol, amend it or request officers to provide a further report to a future meeting.

APPENDIX

11. Appendix A: suggested protocol

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

There are no background papers to this report.