

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2018 at 6.00 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors S. Saleem (Chair), Worlding (Vice Chair), M.J. Dolling, Hussain, Mirza, Moles, Pedersen and R. Saleem.

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:** Ms. P. Brennan, Ms. M. Briggs, Mr. J Jones and Mr A. Maslen

### 01 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 3)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Young and Petts.

### 02 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017, be taken as read, approved as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them subject to the following amendments:

- **Minute No.** 09, Page 5 of the Agenda (5<sup>th</sup> Para-1<sup>st</sup> sentence, 1<sup>st</sup> line) delete “Representative” after “Independent” and replace insert “Member” enquired.....
- **Minute No.** 09, Page 5 of the Agenda, (6<sup>th</sup> Para-third line) insert (was) after “patrols and” and was advised”.....
- **Minute No.** 09, Page 5 of the Agenda, (8<sup>th</sup> Para-third line) insert (had) after “schools were aware and had a duty” ....
- **Minute No.** 10, Page 6 of the Agenda, (4<sup>th</sup> Para-third line) insert (an) after “declare” an interest.
- **Minute No.** 10, Page 5 of the Agenda, (5<sup>th</sup> Para-fourth line) amend “complainants” and replace with (complainant’s).

### 03. ANNUAL REPORT 2016 – 2017 (REF: 6)

The Chair Councillor S. Saleem introduced the item (Ref: 6) and called on the Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer to deliver the report as Councillor Raja Saleem was absent from the meeting at this point but was expected to attend the meeting.

The Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer presented the Annual Report of Standards Committee 2016/17 which included elected Members attendance record from May 2016 to May 2017 for approval and onward submission to the Full Council March meeting.

The Committee was informed the report was of the outgoing Chair, Councillor Raja Saleem who was Chair of the Committee during the period of 2016 to 2017.

Members were invited to comment on the report.

The following comments were received on the report:

- **Behaviour of Members**

Mr. John Jones commended the good behaviour of elected Members of the Council in general and stated that from the perspective of members of the public Members may look at this in greater detail in future.

- **Independent Persons**

The Monitoring Officer stated that there were currently 2 Independent Persons (IPs). Members themselves would not contact IPs when the need arises. Unfortunately, the third IP had resigned and that had reduced the numbers to 2 IPs. If for any reason, a Member would like to contact an IP and neither of the 2 were available, would Luton members be able to speak to an Independent Member of the Committee who was in the role of an IP elsewhere? Councillor Hussain suggested that there was a need to increase the number of IP's especially to address issues promptly when the need arises, and to ensure the issue of conflict of interest was avoided.

In terms of Members Attendance – Appendix B to the Report, Members commented as follows:

- Councillor Hussain commenting on the issues around the low attendance of some elected Members at Council meetings. He stated Members attendance had been a challenge in the past and in his opinion Members must be accountable to their constituents to justify the allowances they receive. He stated that he would invite the press to publish the Members Attendance in order to highlight Members performance at council committees during the past year 2016/17.
- Councillor M. J. Dolling expressed concern that the initial attendance information in the public domain sent to Members was inaccurate; in that there were omissions of Members attendances and overall attendances was incorrectly recorded. He stated that some of the overall totals of attendance had been missed from the report although this had now been corrected in the information that had been circulated at the meeting. He stated that prior to inviting the press to publish this information; a draft copy of the information should be cross checked by all Members to ensure its accuracy.
- Some elected Members raised concerns and questioned the accuracy of the attendance report as they felt this was not a comprehensive record of the attendance of elected Members. The report does not

show the extent of work carried out by elected Members on Outside Bodies or indeed external Organisations. Apart from evening meetings, elected Members attended other adhoc meetings not covered in the Council's Calendar of meetings which were not included in the attendance report. Members cover time limited committees not covered in the report which in turn required a lot of time and dedication. These meetings were also not captured in the attendance report.

- Councillor Raja Saleem stated that elected Members would have the opportunity to amend the report prior to submission to the Full Council meeting. He further stated that Members must be mindful when putting themselves forward for membership of committees with the opportunity to volunteer to be a Member of a committee of their choice.
- In response, the Chair advised that the report was automatically generated from information on the (Committees Information Management System), CIMS. The information is then made available for public access to ensure the Council's accountability.
- The Chair acknowledged that Members attended a number of meetings not recorded on the Attendance record, such as those classified as "Other Bodies" or "Outside Organisations", however, there is a need to ensure transparency as much as possible.
- The Committee discussed Member development and training referring to certain Portfolio Holders who were not always on top of things within their individual areas and not been able to respond to and or give very obvious answers to questions at Full Council meetings.
- A Member further stated that elected Members of the Council are always encouraged to work closely with senior officers of the Council and provide written answers and avoid a situation where wrong information is given.
- It was suggested that when Members Attendance is produced in future, it should include the Paragraph 9 as contained in the Annual Report 2016/17 (Appendix A). This should be included at the bottom of the pages of the Attendance Report as follows (Appendix B)

(9. It is recognised that this record is not intended to reflect in any way the amount of work which Members may undertake, outside the various committees and bodies mentioned, in particular work with outside organisations and for constituents. It is information which can be obtained by trawling the website and is therefore intended to provide a summary, rather than a commentary, on each member's attendance).

**Resolved:** That the Standards Committee Annual Report 2016/17 and Members Attendance Record attached at Appendices A and B respectively to the report of the Chair of Standards Committee be approved and submitted to

the March Full Council meeting, subject to the inclusion of the paragraph below on the Appendix B – Members Attendance Record:

(9. It is recognised that this record is not intended to reflect in any way the amount of work which Members may undertake, outside the various committees and bodies mentioned, in particular work with outside organisations and for constituents. It is information which can be obtained from the Council's website and is therefore intended to provide a summary, rather than a commentary, on each member's attendance).

## **10 COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS (REF: 7)**

The Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer gave an oral update on complaints against members and stated that since the last meeting and advised on two live complaints received against Members.

The details of which are as follows:-

- (i) Complaints against One Member
- (ii) Complaints against 17 Elected Members and some council officers

Both complaints had been taken to the Assessment Panel on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and resolved that there was no case to answer in respect of the grounds of the complaints allegation.

The Complainant objected to the decision of the Assessment Panel and had asked for this to be taken further.

The second complaint against the 17 elected Members had progressed to Joint Ombudsman hearing which also includes other organisations in the alleged complaint.

### **Social Media**

The Service Director HR and Monitoring Officer also informed Members about information a comment made on social media by one of our elected Members. A member of the public had registered a complaint about the tweet by the Councillor.

She stated that this incident highlighted the need for Members to be mindful of information put on social media. This issue had also been flagged up during Member training in terms of taking responsibilities and the use of social media.

**Resolved:** That the verbal update be noted.

## **11 WORK PROGRAMME (REF: 8)**

**Resolved:** (i) Members Training and Attendance Report – Uptake and Training delivered to Members From 2015 to May 2017

- (ii) Social Media Training for Elected Members and how the Council delivers and monitors Use of Social Media by Elected Members
- (iii) GDPR & Data Protection – Information and its relevance to Elected Members – Email to Members of the Committee

**Note: (i) The Democracy and Scrutiny Officer advised Members shortly before 6.00pm that the Chair of the Committee Councillor S. Saleem had previously advised that she may be delayed for this meeting. Following a brief discussion, the Committee resolved that in the absence of the Chair at 6.00pm the Vice Chair, Councillor Worlding would chair the meeting until the Chair's arrival. The meeting commenced at 6.00pm.**

**(ii) The Chair arrived at 6.05pm at the start of agenda item 6 – the Annual Report item. She chaired the remainder of the meeting.**

**(iii) The meeting concluded at 18.50pm**