

Cherwell District Council

The Standards Committee

Minutes of a meeting of The Standards Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 11 October 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Simon Holland (Chairman)
Councillor John Donaldson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Bryn Williams
Councillor Lucinda Wing

Also Present:

Tom Edwards
Graham Matthews – Independent Person

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Perran Moon
Stuart Green – Independent Person

Officers:

Anita Bradley, Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no requests to address the meeting.

5 Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

6 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 10 October 2012, 15 May 2013, 16 June 2014, 19 May 2015, 17 May 2016, 16 May 2017, 15 May 2018, 14 May, 2019 and 19 May 2021 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

7 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

8 **Appointment of Independent Persons**

The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report for the Committee to consider and agree the proposed arrangements for the appointment of Independent Persons.

The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer explained the reasoning for appointing Independent Persons, the required number of Independent Persons and their term of office. She also thanked the current Independent Persons for the work they had carried out and hoped that they would be re-applying.

In considering the Independent Person role profile, Members agreed that the list of required attributes should be reviewed as some would be difficult for applicants to demonstrate, for example, "an understanding of ethical issues". The list should also be shortened to avoid duplication and appeal to as wide a demographic as possible. The Committee also requested that there not be reliance on applicants submitting a CV but rather there should be a short application form.

In response to Members comments, the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer confirmed that "an understanding of ethical issues" would be removed from the attributes and that all other attributes on the list would be reviewed, combined, and detailed as essential and desirable as far as practicable. The Committee's comments regarding the application form were also noted.

The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer advised that virtual interviews would be held with a panel consisting of the Standards Committee Chairman and two other Standards Committee members ensuring cross party representation. The panel would be supported by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer. It was anticipated that the interviews would be in late November and the Democratic and Elections Officer would liaise with Committee members.

Resolved

- (1) That the recruitment of Independent Persons be agreed.

- (2) That the proposed arrangements for the appointment of Independent Persons be agreed.
- (3) That subject to the deletion of 'an understanding of ethical issues' in the Role Profile, the Job Description and Role Profile be agreed and authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee to make any final amendments to the Job Description and Role Profile.
- (4) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee to finalise the recruitment pack.

9 **Monitoring Officer Report**

The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report which gave an overview on potential changes to the member code of conduct and an update on member code of conduct complaints.

The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer explained that during 2020 the Local Government Association had consulted on a new model code of conduct for Members, which had been broadly supported. The emphasis was on creating clarity around responsibilities, the importance of good behaviours, particularly in the use of social media, and the creation of national guidance.

In keeping with the principle that, ideally, a similar Code should be adopted across Oxfordshire, the Monitoring Officers from across the county had agreed to work up a potential revised Code, based on the Model, for consideration by each authority, with a view to potential implementation by each Council by May 2022.

Members agreed that a common code of conduct across all councils in Oxfordshire was sensible. Members requested that when the new code of conduct came forward for Member consideration, the changes between the new and current code of conduct be highlighted.

In response to Members' comments, the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that should Cherwell District Council (or any Oxfordshire authority) wish to modify the proposed Oxfordshire code in any way, the modifications would have to be agreed by all Oxfordshire Councils for the same model code of conduct to be used county wide.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

- (2) That having considered matters of ethical governance within the Standards Committee Terms of Reference no further areas for report were identified.

The meeting ended at 5.20 pm

Chairman:

Date: