

Standards Committee

Excerpt of the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 February 2022 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillors; Margrave (Chairman), Ashford, A Dearing, K Dickson; C Gifford, and Tracey.

Also Present:

Independent Person: Belinda Pyke.

Officers: Graham Leach (Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer); and Phil Grafton (Monitoring Officer).

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

11. Adoption of LGA Model Code of Conduct and associated documents

The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer which brought forward proposals for the adoption of the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct, associated guidance and procedures.

Both Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) and Warwick District Council (WDC) had previously decided to adopt the LGA code of conduct for its own Members, and the main purpose of the report was to seek adoption of the latest version of the document. It followed that if both Councils supported this proposal then it would appear sensible to have a common set of related policies and procedures, a joint training programme and a single date for bringing the two codes into operation.

In 2021 the Committee and subsequently Council agreed to the adoption of the Model Code of Conduct and delegated the authority of it coming into force, along with the adoption of a number of supporting documents to the Committee.

The Local Government Association (LGA) had, since then, made some amendments to the Model Code of Conduct. In brief the changes to the Code were tidying up and providing clarification, so it was easier to understand as well as updating so that those parts that required legislative change moved to discretionary areas for Council's to consider. An example of this was that the original model included a requirement to declare "Any unpaid directorship" as a disclosable pecuniary interest. This was not required by law and therefore had been moved into the additional interests to be declared.

As a result of these changes, it was recommended that the revised Code should be adopted by Council following a recommendation from this Committee.

It should also have been noted that the LGA had committed to reviewing the Code on an annual basis to ensure it was still fit for purpose. Any

proposed amendments by the LGA would be considered by the Monitoring Officer and brought to Members as they consider appropriate.

The Local Government Association (LGA) had produced [guidance notes on the Code](#) and its application. These had been considered by officers, along with feedback from Councillors/Council's on the current arrangements in place at both Council's. These had then been used to develop and revise the suite of documents appended to the report.

The appendices to the report were an amalgamation of standard documents already in use at Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) and Warwick District Council (WDC) and were considered to be fit for purpose. To be clear, the existing terms of reference for the Committee and any powers previously delegated to the Monitoring Officer would remain in place for now and were unaffected by any of the recommendations.

The Monitoring Officer had arranged for an external trainer, Bethan Evans, to provide three training sessions on the new Code of Conduct. Bethan was an expert in this area of work and had developed the LGA training programme on the Code of Conduct. These sessions would be online and available for District, Town and Parish Councillors to attend. Senior officers from both Councils as well as Clerks to all Town/Parish Council's would also be invited to attend the training.

There were further procedural documents in place at both SDC and WDC and at present these would remain in place unchanged. However, they would be reviewed to be combined into a standard set for both Council's. Once this review was complete, they would be brought forward for approval.

In presenting the report, the Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that Paragraph 1.9 of the report referred to other documents that would be required to be reviewed and this included the Complaints Procedures, which differed, to some extent, at both Councils. The intention would be to convene a small group, comprising representatives from both Councils, to work together on those documents, to bring them forward as joint documents for sign off by each Committee. The group would comprise both Chairman, an Independent Person from each Council, and the Monitoring Officer. The two co-opted Parish Representatives on this Committee would also be approached for their views.

In response to the questions from the Committee was explained that:

- Stratford-on-Avon District Council had two co-opted Parish/Town Council Councillors on their Audit & Standards Committee and this was being considered as an option for Warwick District; and
- The proposals presented would have come forward without the proposed merger.

It was proposed by Councillor Tracey and seconded by Councillor Ashford that all recommendations in the report be approved as follows:

Recommended to Council that the revised LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted to replace the existing Code of Conduct for Members from 1 May 2022, be adopted.

Resolved that

- (1) subject to Council adopting the revised LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct, the Standards Committee approves the following documents as set out in the respective appendices to the report:
 - the form and guidance for declaring interest and gifts & hospitality as set out at Appendices 2 and 3 to the report; and
 - the form for making complaints as set out at Appendix 4 to the report;
- (2) the LGA Model Code be promoted for adoption by all Town and Parish Councils in the District, as a replacement for their current code of conduct;
- (3) the proposed training arrangements for Councillors and officers, be noted; and
- (4) the Committee delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairmen of the Committees to make minor amendments and formatting changes to the documents prior to publication.

(The meeting ended at 6.18 pm)

CHAIRMAN
14 June 2022