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Standards Committee

Wednesday, 6 February 2019 at 2.00 p.m.
Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W R', is positioned above a faint, illegible stamp.

Chief Executive

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones (Chair)	Labour Party
Councillor Marjorie Bradshaw	Conservative Party
Councillor Harry Howard	Labour Party
Councillor Joan Lowe	Labour Party
Councillor Tony McDermott	Labour Party
Councillor Pauline Sinnott	Labour Party
Councillor Kevan Wainwright	Labour Party
Councillor Mike Wharton	Labour Party
Councillor Geoff Zygadllo	Labour Party
Mr Tony Luxton	Independent Co-optee
Canon David Felix	Parish Council Co-optee

*Please contact Angela Scott on 0151 511 8670 or
angela.scott@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is provisionally on 12 February 2020*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	1 - 3
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
3. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT	4 - 6
4. STANDARDS COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT	7 - 12
5. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE The Committee on Standards in Public Life is due to publish its report into local government standards on 30 January 2019. The Monitoring Officer will provide a verbal update.	

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Standards Committee Wednesday, 7 February 2018 The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors P. Lloyd Jones (Chair), M. Bradshaw, C. Loftus, J. Lowe, McDermott, Wainwright, Wharton and Mr A. Luxton (Co-optee), Professor D Norman (Independent Person), Mr R Radley (Independent Person)

Apologies for Absence: Mrs A. Morris (Co-optee) and Mrs D.Howard (Independent Person)

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney and A. Scott

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>STC1 MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2017, having been circulated, were signed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>STC2 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT</p> <p>The Committee considered a report of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer, which summarised the work of the Committee in the last Municipal Year.</p> <p>At the meeting in February 2017, Members had considered the Annual Report, which summarised the work of the Committee. There had been an update on issues that had arisen in other parts of the country, which provided an insight into the nature of matters raised and how they were dealt with elsewhere.</p> <p>A verbal update was given on local matters which had been considered since the previous meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted and referred to Council for information.</p>	<p>Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer</p>

STC3 STANDARDS COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with an update on issues which had arisen in other parts of the country, which provided an insight into the kind of issues faced and the manner in which they had proceeded.

Details on recent cases were given from the following locations:-

- Sandwell (Birmingham);
- Honiton (Devon);
- Derby City;
- Conwy;
- Bath and North East Somerset;
- East Riding of Yorkshire;
- Cumbria;
- Bolton; and
- St Helens

A verbal update was given on two local matters that had been considered since the last meeting.

In discussion during the meeting, Members considered the use of social media by Parish Councillors and Elected Members, as well as the distribution of election and campaign material to households that displayed the 'No Canvassers' (or similar) signs. It was considered that training in the use of social media could be offered, and in any event, it was recommended that such advice should form a part of the Induction Training for new Members.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

STC4 ADVICE SOUGHT ON DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Professor David Norman (Independent Person), sought the advice of the Committee regarding the circumstances of a declaration by a Council-appointed Trustee.

The Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/ Monitoring Officer responded to the request, and offered appropriate advice.

Following some general debate on the matter, it was agreed that refresher training on the Council's Code of Conduct for Members could be arranged, and further, that

such a training session could also incorporate advice on the use of Social Media, Data Protection and Freedom of Information guidance.

RESOLVED: That the guidance provided be noted and the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/ Monitoring Officer be asked to organise refresher training on the Members Code of Conduct, as appropriate.

Operational
Director, Legal and
Democratic
Services/Monitoring
Officer

Meeting ended at 2.54 p.m.

REPORT TO:	Standards Committee
DATE:	6 February 2019
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer
PORTFOLIO:	Leader
SUBJECT:	Standards Committee Annual Report
WARDS:	Borough-Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To summarise the work of the Committee in the last municipal year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted and referred to Council for information.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Throughout the year Standards Committee was made up of Councillors P Lloyd Jones (Chair), M Bradshaw, Howard, C Loftus, J Lowe, McDermott, Wainwright and Wharton. In addition, there were two co-opted independent members, Mr Tony Luxton and Mrs Anita Morris. There was also one co-opted Parish Council Member, Rev Canon D Felix and one vacancy. The Council's three independent members under the provisions of the Localism Act were Professor David Norman, Mrs Diane Howard and Mr Roy Radley. The Committee met on one occasion during the year.

3.2 The role of the Standards Committee is to:

- Help Councillor and Co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Promote and maintain a high standard of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives.
- Advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Provide training to Councillors and Co-opted Members on matters relating to Members' conduct.
- Deal with complaints against Councillors and Parish Councillors.
- Deal with matters concerning politically restricted posts.
- Deal with dispensations relating to Declarations of Interest.

- 3.3 At the meeting on 7 February 2018, Members considered the Annual Report which summarised the work of the Committee in the last municipal year.

In addition, Members also received a report which provided an update on issues which had arisen in other parts of the country, which gave an insight into the kinds of issues faced and the manner in which they had proceeded.

A verbal update was given on local matters which had been considered since the last meeting.

The Monitoring Officer reported that no matters had been brought to his attention which required a formal investigation.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None.

- 6.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

None

- 6.3 A Healthy Halton

None.

- 6.4 A Safer Halton

None.

- 6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 No risks have been identified which require controlled measures.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 A LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 There are no background papers within the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO:	Standards Committee
DATE:	6 February 2019
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer
PORTFOLIO:	Leader
SUBJECT:	Standards Committee Update
WARDS:	Borough-Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of Standards issues which have arisen recently.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Members' attention is drawn to a number of press articles attached to this report concerning Standards issues in other parts of the UK.
- 3.2 The intention is to give Members a flavour of matters dealt with by other authorities, and how sanctions have been imposed. It is hoped that this will prompt discussion at the meeting.
- 3.3 The Monitoring Officer will give a verbal update at the meeting on local issues relating to Halton.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None.

6.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 No risks have been identified which require control measures.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The report itself does not contain any specific equality and diversity issues.

9.0 A LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

Interesting cases

Authority	Details	Link
Fenland District Council	Councillor breached code by falsifying mileage claims.	https://bit.ly/2HxILWS https://bit.ly/2DwKlxB
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Councillor found to have brought Council into disrepute for comments about the budget	https://bit.ly/2vyW6F7
City of Stoke-on-Trent	Councillor refused to apologise or undergo training for code breaches relating to behaviour in pubs and fish & chip shop	https://bit.ly/2B3v0s6
West Norfolk Council	Councillor censured after he made a “grossly sexist” remark	https://bit.ly/2B2fr3W
Northamptonshire County Council	Councillor sanctioned for ‘bullying and offensive’ tweets	https://bit.ly/2WfvBjy
Rutland County Council	Councillor reported to the police over ‘racist and abusive’ Facebook posts	https://bit.ly/2MBixkk
Thurrock Council	Councillor breached code by leaking confidential email to the press	https://bit.ly/2Wgjra5
Test Valley Borough Council	Party expel councillor for racist Facebook post	https://bit.ly/2MwMhP9
South Derbyshire District Council	Councillor expelled from his party after being convicted and assaulting a woman	https://bit.ly/2COZHRY
Devon County Council	Councillor censured for sexual harassment and abuse of female employees over ‘many years’	https://bit.ly/2Dz9ygv
Whitehaven Town Council	Councillor was found to have brought the Council into disrepute but alleging	https://bit.ly/2Rf2TLP

	illegal activities	
East Riding Council	Local paper criticises the toothlessness of the standards regime after councillor repeatedly breaches the code and refuses to comply with sanctions. Councillor argues that he's not acting in his capacity as a councillor when he posts comments about members and officer online.	https://bit.ly/2Ug1k29
Leicestershire County Council	Councillor who suggested that his Council's independent persons were not independent found to have breached the code and asked to apologise.	https://bit.ly/2HvLDSZ
Ferryhill Town Council	town mayor accused of sharing homophobic and anti-Islam views on social media	https://bit.ly/2Dy0vMJ
Aylesbury Vale District Council	Councillor resigns after investigation found she voted on planning application that she had financial interest in.	https://bit.ly/2RbUAQZ
East Riding Council	Councillor who criticised officer on his blog found to have breached the code.	https://bit.ly/2HyO4Eo
Isle of Wight Council	Councillor criticised for tweet.	https://bit.ly/2CP2ZEO
Peacehaven Town Council	District Council request that town council put a plan of action in place following the finding that three councillors bullied the clerk, undermining her position at work.	https://bit.ly/2FPdVq9
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	Councillor found to have breached the code by	https://bit.ly/2HxC1an

	making false claims about a rival in an election leaflet.	
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	Councillor found to have breached the code by bullying and being abusive to female council staff.	https://bit.ly/2R9JZYb
Forest of Dean District Council	Councillor found to have breached the code for punching a man outside a pub questions the validity of the Council dealing with the matter.	https://bit.ly/2Htzkqo
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Former councillor breached code through a series of offensive WhatsApp messages about fellow councillors.	https://bit.ly/2B2spz0
Westminster Council	Councillor investigated for accepting gifts and hospitality 893 times over six years.	https://bit.ly/2RebJtB
Coventry City Council	Councillor breached code of conduct over non-declaration of business interests referred to police and making threats.	https://bit.ly/2FZ7b8j
Basildon Council	Councillor breached the code of conduct by making defamatory statements about another councillor on social media.	https://bit.ly/2DABArV
Sheffield City Council	Council decide that councillors running fake Twitter profiles to send abuse falls outside code of conduct.	https://bit.ly/2Qnw0ky
Staffordshire Moorland District Council	Investigation concludes that a councillor brought her office and authority into disrepute by lying about her council tax	https://bit.ly/2BdUxPN

	payments.	
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