

Medway Council
Meeting of Councillor Conduct Committee
Wednesday, 15 June 2022
6.00pm to 6.31pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Brake, Howcroft-Scott, McDonald, Price and Tranter

Substitutes: None

In Attendance: Stephanie Davis, Democratic Services Officer
Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director Legal and Governance
Vicky Nutley, Interim Head of Legal Services

58 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Mrs Diane Chambers.

Appointment of Chairman for the meeting – In the Chairman's absence, Councillor Kemp was appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

59 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 16 February 2022 and the record of the Joint Meeting of Committees held on 18 May 2022 were agreed and signed as the Chairman as accurate.

60 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

61 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

62 Annual Monitoring Officer Report 2021-22

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Legal and Governance introduced the report which summarised the activities of the Monitoring Officer for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

Members raised several questions and comments which included:

- **Complaints** – it was asked if the complainants of the six cases that were determined as no further action by the Monitoring Officer were satisfied with the outcomes and how confident the Monitoring Officer was that processes had been followed appropriately in each case. The Monitoring Officer responded that it was difficult to obtain complainant satisfaction on a case unless they had received the outcome they expected or anticipated. There was however confidence that processes in each case had been followed diligently, and complainants had been provided with a comprehensive decision letter that detailed the steps taken and reasons behind the decision. Additionally, the cases had been reviewed by one of the Independent Persons, who had been satisfied with the application of process in each case and had agreed with the Monitoring Officer's decision.

In response to a question on whether the outcome of the cases would be the same had they been brought before the Committee, the Monitoring Officer said that the outcomes would have been the same. The ability for the matter to be addressed through delegated authority had allowed for decisions to be taken more quickly and efficiently.

It was asked what opportunities there may be for learning and if any had been derived from the process, the Monitoring Officer said that where emerging trends and/or patterns were identified, officers would utilise the opportunity for further training and to raise awareness.

- **Dispensations** – it was asked how long dispensations were in place for those members who no longer held the office relating to the dispensation. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that dispensations were in place for the term of office / for a period of time, whichever was the shorter. If a Member was to be reappointed for a new term of office, a new dispensation form would need to be submitted.
- **Register of interests** – the importance of keeping an up to date register of interest was discussed, and it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer

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would send a list to the Group Whips to enable the Whips to send an email to their respective Groups reminding them to complete an update of their register of interest.

The Committee took the opportunity to congratulate Vicky Nutley on her appointment as Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Decision:

The Committee noted the content of the report.

63 Member Conduct Training - Roles and Responsibilities

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Legal and Governance introduced the report which proposed a two part training session to be held in the Autumn, the first for all Members on roles and responsibilities, and the second for Cabinet Members/ Director roles in Local Authority organisation.

Members raised several questions and comments which included:

- **Attendance** – in response to a question on whether the sessions would be mandatory to attend, the Monitoring Officer said that he did not have authority to mandate attendance, he would encourage all Members to attend and would welcome support from this Committee and Group Whips in conveying that message to Members.
- **Further Sessions** – it was commented that the second session was aimed at particular Members only and it was asked what plan of action was in place for the opposition spokes to receive the same training or for another session to take place in May 2023. The Monitoring Officer said that the training was being delivered on the basis of the current position and membership and that a further training session would take place in the 2023/24 Municipal year, after the next local elections in May 2023. Officers were in the process of planning for the election year and building this into the induction process for new Councillors and Councillors that would be undertaking new roles and responsibilities.

A Member asked that consideration be given to ensuring representation from the opposition side by extension of an invite to the second part of the training. The Monitoring Officer said that whilst he was minded to keep the second session for those with particular roles as already discussed, he would offer to use the material from that training to deliver a session at a later date for anyone else that would be interested in undertaking the training session.

Decision:

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The Committee noted the content of the report.

Chairman

Date:

Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332104

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk