

Ethics Committee

Meeting of held on Monday, 29 July 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair)

Councillors Helen Redfern, Esther Sutton and Luke Shortland, Jessica Hammersley-Rich and Jeet Bains
Luisa Zingone (Independent Person (Non-Member, no-voting rights)) and
Ashok Kumar (Independent Person (Non-Member, no-voting rights))

Apologies: Councillor Brigitte Graham and Mario Creatura

PART A

1/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

2/24 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

3/24 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

4/24 Work Programme

The Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, and Democratic Services and Governance Officer, Klaudia Petecka, presented the updated work programme including the proposed agenda for the next meeting, scheduled for the 13th of November 2024.

The proposed agenda for the next meeting looked as follows:

- Standing items:
 - o Members' Dispensations,
 - o Complaint Monitoring,
 - o Ethics Committee Work Programme,
 - o Members Gifts and Hospitality,
 - o Legal & Ethics Update,
- Other items:

- ‘Tidying up’ amendments to the Member’s Code of Conduct and rearrangement for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Code,
- Outcomes of the Independent Person Survey.

The Committee agreed to expand the scope of the *‘Tidying up’ amendments to the Member’s Code of Conduct and rearrangement for dealing with the allegations of breaches of the Code* by the Officer and Member Protocol review.

RESOLVED: That updated work programme as detailed in the report be noted.

5/24 Member Gifts and Hospitality

The Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, introduced the Gifts and Hospitality report covering the last reporting period. It was noted that an addendum to the report had been circulated to the Committee after the publication date.

The Committee agreed that information outlining the requirements for declarations—including value thresholds, timelines for providing additional details, and exemptions from declaration—would be shared with Members.

RESOLVED: That the Gifts and Hospitality declarations made by Members since 15 November 2023 are noted.

6/24 Update on Ethics Complaints Received in the Fourth Quarter of 2023

The Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, introduced the report on Ethics Complaints received in the Fourth Quarter of 2023. It was explained that during this period, one new complaint had been received, and one ongoing complaint, previously presented to the Committee, remained under review.

RESOLVED: That the Quarterly Complaints report be noted.

7/24 Update on the Ethics Complaints Received in the First Quarter of 2024

The Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, introduced the Update on Ethics Complaints Received in the First Quarter of 2024 report. It was explained that no complaints were received in this period.

RESOLVED: That the Quarterly Complaints report be noted.

8/24 Annual Complaints Report

The Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, introduced the Annual Complaint Report, providing details of the complaints received throughout the year. It was highlighted that 14 complaints were received last year, which was a significant improvement compared to the 43 complaints received in the previous year.

The Council's review of the Member's Code of Conduct and the arrangements for handling allegations of breaches was also noted.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following points were clarified:

- The 43 complaints received in the previous year was considered to be relatively high. It was also explained that there was currently no comparative data available from other local authorities; however, it was agreed that such data would be requested from peer authorities.
- There was insufficient data to establish a causal link between the decrease in complaints and the development of social media guidance.

It was agreed that the complaints section of the Council's website would be refreshed and a Teams page would be created for Members to access all necessary documents.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Complaint report be noted.

9/24 Independent Person Appointment

The Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, and the Democratic Services and Governance Officer, Klaudia Petecka, introduced the Independent Person Appointment Report.

The Committee thanked the Members and officers involved in the recruitment process for their efforts.

RESOLVED: That the appointment of Joanne Middlewick as an Independent Person be recommended to Full Council for agreement.

10/24 Recent Developments in Ethical Standards Report

The Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, and Principal Lawyer, Gina Clarke, introduced the report.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was clarified that:

- Councillors have enhanced protection regarding the freedom of speech during public meetings.
- Regarding the Warwickshire case, if the complaint had been received from a different stakeholder, the outcome of the investigation would

likely have been unchanged. However, this would depend on the context and severity of the situation.

It was agreed that the Recent Developments in Ethical Standards Report will be shared with all Members.

11/24 Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was not necessary to exclude the press and public from any portion of this meeting.

12/24 Update on Ethics Complaints Received in the Fourth Quarter of 2023

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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