

Nottingham City Council

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Zoom on 5 February 2021 from 10.33 am - 11.07 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Neghat Khan (Chair)
Councillor Graham Chapman
Councillor Audrey Dinnall
Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Wendy Smith
Nigel Cullen – Independent Person

Absent

Councillor Roger Steel
Councillor Sam Webster

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Nancy Barnard - Governance and Electoral Services Manager
Beth Brown - Head of Legal and Governance

7 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Roger Steel – Person Reasons
Councillor Sam Webster – Other Council Business

Malcolm Townroe – Other Council Business

8 Declarations of Interest

None

9 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

10 Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct 2020

Beth Brown, Head of Legal and Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report outlining the following points:

- (a) In December the Local Government Association (LGA) had published a model Councillors' Code of Conduct following an extensive consultation process to which this committee responded in July 2020.
- (b) Changes made to the model code, following the consultation, include:

- The Code applies whenever a member is acting in their capacity as a Councillor.
 - The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including on social media.
 - The term 'respect' remains (as opposed to the term 'civility' proposed in the consultation).
 - A requirement under the Code to undertake Code of Conduct training
 - A requirement to register gifts and hospitality with a value of over £50 within 28 days of receipt.
 - Amendments to the section and annexe on interests with the Code now referring to 'Registerable Interests' which include Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (as prescribed by The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012), and Other Registerable Interests and clarity on when councillors can and cannot participate in meetings depending on the interest declared.
- (c) The LGA are committed to reviewing the Code annually to ensure it is up to date and relevant. Any changes proposed as a result of this process will be reported to this committee for consideration.
- (d) Nottingham City Council had previously included local provisions relating to safeguarding training and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, which it is recommended remain in the Code.
- (e) The Code will be reviewed further as part of the wider Constitutional work resulting from the Report in the Public Interest and the Recovery and Improvement Plan and any further proposed changes will be reported back to this committee.

During the subsequent discussion the following points were raised:

- (f) Concern was expressed that the proposed £50 limit, above which any gifts of hospitality must be registered, was too high and a lower limit of £25 was suggested.
- (g) It was suggested that references to individuals with interests in matters being discussed having to leave the room during those discussions may not apply to virtual meetings. It was therefore suggested that the word "room" be replaced with the word "meeting".
- (h) Concern was expressed about the lack of sanctions available for use in cases where the Code has been breached but it was acknowledged that any strengthening of these sanctions would require a change to primary legislation.
- (i) It was confirmed that the Code incorporates provisions of the Equalities Act 2010, including in its definitions both implied and explicit acts of discrimination and aggression.

Resolved to recommend the revised code to Council, including the local provisions, with the following amendments:

- (1) a lower limit of £25, above which any gifts of hospitality must be registered, and**
- (2) the replacement of the word "room" with the word "meeting" in all instances relating to the disclosure of interests.**

11 Councillor Complaints - Update

Nancy Barnard, Governance and Electoral Services Manager, introduced the report, covering the following issues:

- (a) All complaints requiring investigation have been resolved at the informal stage of the process.
- (b) One complaint was rejected due to insufficient information from the complainant and three were resolved informally.
- (c) Two complaints remain outstanding as further information is awaited from the complainant.

Resolved to note the contents of the report.