

# **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of **Standards Committee** held in Committee Room 1A - County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 5 September 2019 at 10.00 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor B Kellett (Chair)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Atkinson, A Bainbridge, E Bell, J Bell, J Clark, M Clarke, E Huntington (Vice-Chair), J Nicholson, A Savory and D Stoker

### **Co-opted Members:**

Town Councillor T Batson and Parish Councillor R Harrison.

#### **1 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4 National Picture - Standards Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update on standards issues affecting Local Government (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor E Bell referred to paragraph 10 of the report and asked what the review meetings were referred to under sub-paragraph c. K Coulson-Patel, Governance Solicitor replied that she would make further enquiries of Devon County Council about the review meetings.

The Governance Solicitor informed the meeting that the cases referred to in the report demonstrated the creativity of Council's in the delivery of more broad sanctions.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted and officers be requested to monitor the progress of the matters referred to and keep the Committee updated.

**5 Review of Employee Code of Values, Behaviours and Conduct - Gifts and Hospitality**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding proposed revisions to the Employee Code of Values, Behaviours and Conduct on Section 5.10 Gifts and Hospitality (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Governance Solicitor informed the Committee that as part of the aim to promote high ethical standards within the authority and as good practice a review was undertaken of the Code of Values, Behaviours and Conduct in January 2019, particularly in relation to Gifts and Hospitality.

The review recommended a number of amendments to the Code by way of clarification to make it easier for employees to understand their obligations in relation to gifts and hospitality.

Councillor Stoker referred to 'short notice' in Paragraph 13 of the report and suggested that the term short notice should be clearly defined. Councillor Stoker also referred to 'specific circumstances' in the Code and suggested that some examples be given of such special circumstances.

The Governance Solicitor undertook to provide clarity on both of these matters.

**Resolved:**

That the proposed changes be considered by the Constitution Working Group prior to consideration by full Council.

**6 Code of Conduct Update**

The Committee noted a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update on activity since the last meeting in respect of complaints received by Durham County Council against councillors (for copy see file of Minutes).