

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held in the Holding Room, The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Monday, 9 October 2017 at 5:00 pm.

Simon Bovey
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
The Chair to note any apologies for absence.
2. MINUTES
The Standards Committee to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2017.
3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
6. RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER(S) CO-OPTES TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
A verbal update to be given on the recruitment of Independent Member(s) Co Optees to the Standards Committee.
7. DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
The Standards Committee to consider a draft Communications Strategy to promote the work of the Standards Committee and the importance of ethical governance.
8. STATISTICS
The Standards Committee to consider a report detailing the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements
9. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PLAN
The Standards Committee to consider its Work Plan 2017/2018.

Public Participation

Members of the public may address the Committee on any non-procedural matter listed on this agenda. Addresses shall not last longer than three minutes. Committee members may then ask questions of the speaker. No prior notice is required prior to the commencement of the meeting of a request to address the Committee.

10. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

THE CHAIR TO MOVE:

“THAT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS BE EXCLUDED FROM THE REMAINDER OF THE MEETING ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE IS LIKELY TO BE DISCLOSURE TO THEM OF SUCH CATEGORIES OF EXEMPT INFORMATION AS DEFINED BY SECTION 100(1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS LISTED AGAINST SUCH ITEMS OF BUSINESS BY REFERENCE TO THE APPROPRIATE PARAGRAPH OF SCHEDULE 12A TO SUCH ACT.”

Public Participation

Members of the public may address the Committee on any non-procedural matter listed on this agenda. Addresses shall not last longer than three minutes. Committee members may then ask questions of the speaker. No prior notice is required prior to the commencement of the meeting of a request to address the Committee.

Agenda Item 2

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 17 July 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Suresh Patel (Chair); Councillor Brian Oldham (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Andrew Kilbride, Les Marriott, Zoe Smith and Alan Bottwood

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brian Markham and Councillor Cathrine Russell.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of 20 March 2017 as a true and accurate record.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

6. RECRUITMENT OF PARISH COUNCILLOR(S) AND INDEPENDENT MEMBER(S) CO OPTES TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Standards Committee was apprised of the applications and recent interviews that had taken place for the vacancies of co-optees to the Committee – Independent Members and Parish Councillors.

The Chair advised that four interviews had been held, three for the roles of Independent Member Co-Optees and one for the vacancy of Parish Councillor Co Optee. The Standards Working Group had felt that just one of the applicants (Applicant A) met the criteria for the role of Independent Member Co Optee; it did not recommend the other applicants for the vacancies. It was suggested that Applicant A is offered the role of Independent Member Co-Optee to the Standards Committee.

The Standards Committee suggested that it would ask the successful applicant, should she accept the role of independent member co optee; to come to the next meeting of full Council and be introduced to all Councillors.

The Standards Working Group agreed also that it would ask the Standards Committee if it could re-advertise for the roles and include further advertising:

- Ask Parish Clerks to add the vacancies of two Parish Councillor Co-Optees to the agenda of the Parish Council
- Advertise the vacancy of Independent Member Co Optee amongst the Council's Community Forums

Resolved: That:

- (1) Applicant A is offered the role of Independent Member Co-Optee to the Standards Committee
- (2) Applicant A, should she accept the role of independent member co optee; is invited to come to the next meeting of full Council and be introduced to all Councillors
- (3) The vacancies of Parish Councillor Co-Optees and Independent Member Co Optee are re-advertised

7. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY - DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

The draft Gifts and Hospitality – Guidance for Councillors was presented to the Committee for approval.

The Standards Working Group (Work Plan) had considered the draft document at its recent meeting. Currently the Register of Gifts and Hospitality by Councillors form states that this form relates to gifts/hospitalities in excess of £25. The Standards Working Group agreed that this form should be updated to relate to gifts/hospitalities in excess of £50; which would be consistent with the Code.

In response to a query about declaring smaller gifts under the value of £50 but cumulatively amounted to a figure more than £50; the Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer advised that Councillors should declare such gifts. The key issue was that Councillors declared gifts even less than £50 if accepting the gifts impacted on their roles as Councillors, it being important for there to be transparency.

Resolved: That:

- (1) The Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Councillors is approved.
- (2) The financial limit above which Councillors must declare the receipt of gifts and hospitalities is £50 which is consistent with the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

8. EMPLOYEE'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The Standards Committee considered an updated version of the Employees' Code of Conduct following a recommendation made by the Standards Working Group (Work Plan.) The draft document includes one additional amendment made by the Monitoring Officer after the Working Group had considered the draft Code, this took into account further consultation with Officers.

The main revisions in the document were drawn to the attention of the Committee.

The Standards Committee discussed the document, made comment, asked questions and heard:

- There will be publicity to all staff regarding the updated Employee's Code of Conduct
- It was noted that the Employees' Code of Conduct is different to the Members' Code of Conduct
- There is a suite of Policies on the Intranet that staff must comply with.
- It needs to be ensured that all staff are aware of the Policies

Resolved: That:

- (1) The updated draft Employees' Code of Conduct is approved;
- (2) Authority is delegated to the Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer to make any necessary minor amendments to the Employees' Code of Conduct prior to its publication to all staff; and
- (3) It is noted that MTUCM will be notified of the updated Employees' Code of Conduct.

9. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Standards Committee Work Plan for 2017 – 2018 was noted.

The Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer explained the Code of Conduct Arrangements to the Committee. This applies to both Borough and Parish Councillors.

It was suggested that statistics regarding the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements is presented to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) The Standards Work Plan for 2017 -2018 is noted.
- (2) Statistics regarding the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements is presented to the next meeting of the Standards Committee

The meeting concluded at 5:30 pm

M8176

Appendices: 1



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Title	Communications Strategy – Standards Committee
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Committee Meeting Date:	9 October 2017
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask the Standards Committee to consider adopting a Communications Strategy for the Standards Committee; that promotes the work of the Standards Committee and the importance of ethical governance.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the 'Communications Strategy for the Standards Committee' at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 To instruct the Borough Secretary to make arrangements for the promotion of the work of the Standards Committee in accordance with the Communications Strategy.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background and Issues

- 3.1.1 At its meeting held on 19 December 2016, the Standards Committee set up a Working Group to put together a draft Work Plan for the Standards Committee for 2017/2018. Membership of the Working Group consists of Councillors Patel, Oldham, Smith and B. Markham. The establishment of a Work Plan will ensure that the Committee can meet all of its responsibilities and obligations during the year. It is seen as good practice for the Standards Committee to produce an annual Work Plan.
- 3.1.2 As detailed on the Work Plan, the Standards Committee is scheduled to consider at its meeting on 9 October 2017, a draft Communications Strategy for the Standards Committee. The draft Communications Strategy will be

considered by the Standards Working Group (Work Plan) at its meeting on 2 October 2017.

3.1.3 The comments from the Working Group on the draft Communications Strategy will be provided to the meeting.

3.1.4 Appended to this briefing note is a draft 'Communications Strategy for the Standards Committee' for the Committee's consideration and comment.

3.2 Choices

3.2.1 Members are asked to approve the draft 'Communications Strategy for the Standards Committee' at Appendix 1.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 This report does not have any direct policy implications.

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 There will be a resource implication, in terms of officer time to promote the Communications Strategy.

4.2.2 Adopting a comprehensive Communications Strategy will assist the Council in reducing any potential risk to the Council that could arise through Councillors being inadequately informed about governance matters.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

4.4 Equality

4.4.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Not applicable.

4.6 Other Implications

4.6.1 None.

5. Background Papers

5.1 Report and Appendix – Draft Communications Strategy — Standards Working Group (Work Plan) - 2 October 2017

**Francis Fernandes
Borough Secretary**

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Draft v 1

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Communication Strategy – Ethical and Governance Matters

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted Members of the Council; for assisting Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct and for promoting high ethical standards within Parish Councils. Within its terms of reference the Standards Committee can also undertake any action that improves, promotes, safeguards and facilitates the highest standard of probity and ethical conduct by the Council, its Members and Officers and advise the Council on ethical aspects of good governance standards for public life.
- 1.2 Members of the Standards Committee may also be required to participate directly in the process of dealing with allegations that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct if a Hearing Panel of the Committee is established following an investigation into an alleged breach of the Code.
- 1.3 It is important that individual Members of the Standards Committee are themselves adequately communicated with in ethical and governance matters to enable them to act as effective Members of the Committee.
- 1.4 Ethical and governance matters is a key aspect for all 45 Members of Northampton Borough Council.
- 1.5 It is important that all residents and stakeholders are communicated with on the standards of public life in Northampton.

2 Key Objectives of the Councillor Communication Strategy – Ethical and governance matters

- To raise the profile of Ethical and Governance Matters and the work of the Standards Committee, both internally and externally.
- To improve understanding amongst Councillors and Officers of the importance of ethical and governance matters.
- To ensure Councillors, the public and key partners are aware of Northampton Borough Council's Code of Conduct.
- To explain to the public what the Council, and the Standards Committee, does to ensure it is governing ethically.

3 Key Messages

3.1 The Standards Committee is an independent Advisory Committee for the Council which helps to maintain and monitor the standards of public life in Northampton.

3.2 Standards of public life in Northampton borough are high.

3.3 To communicate clear and consistent key messages highlighting the Council's commitment to being an ethical organisation by ensuring that Councillors uphold their responsibilities and conduct their business in an ethical manner.

3.4 To raise the profile of the role of the Standards Committee and promote the important contribution it makes to local community, reinforcing the importance of ethical and governance matters.

4 Key Information

4.1 Key information that is provided, includes:

- Information regarding the role of the Standards Committee and what the Committee does not deal with
- The membership of the Standards Committee
- How to contact the Monitoring Officer should an individual want to submit a Code of Conduct complaint

5 Audience

5.1 The audience includes:

- Residents and other stakeholders in the Borough of Northampton
- Members of Northampton Borough Council
- Council staff
- External bodies
- Local media
- National and professional media

6 Vehicles for publicity

6.1 Vehicles for publicity include:

- Press releases
- Standards Committee webpage
- Council wide publicity, via the Intranet
- Residents' newsletters

6.2 Specific information about the Committee, such as the process for complaints in accordance with Northampton Borough Council's Code of Conduct, are provided on the Council's webpage.

6.3 The Work of the Committee is detailed with its annual Work Programme.

7 Review

7.1 The Councillor Communication Strategy – Ethical and Governance Matters will be reviewed annually.

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Appendices: 0



STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Title	STATISTICS – CODE OF CONDUCT ARRANGEMENTS COMPLAINTS
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Committee Meeting Date:	9 October 2017
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to report on the statistics regarding the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements for the Committee for its information.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the statistics in relation to the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements.
- 2.2 That statistical data in relation the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements is presented to the Committee on an annual basis.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background and Issues

- 3.1.1 It was resolved at the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 17 July 2017 that information regarding the number of complaints received, and dealt with, in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements for the Committee for its information at its October meeting.
- 3.1.2 Statistical data in relation to the number of complaints received and dealt with in respect of the Code of Conduct Arrangements is detailed below. Data has been provided from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017. Details of complaints received during 2017 to date are also provided.

2015/2016

One complaint against a Parish Councillor. This complaint has been dealt with and the file closed.

2016/2017

Twelve complaints. Eight against Parish Councillors and four in respect of Northampton Borough Councillors. All complaints have been dealt with and the files closed.

2017/2018

To date seven complaints have been received. Two against Parish Councillors and five in respect of Northampton Borough Councillors. The five complaints in respect of Northampton Borough Councillors are still live. Three of these complaints have only very recently been submitted.

3.2 Choices

3.2.1 Members are asked to note the information provided.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 This report does not have any direct policy implications.

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 This report does not have any direct resource implications.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 Complaints received are in accordance with the Arrangements for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Northampton Borough Council Members' Code of Conduct and of Codes of Conduct adopted by Parish Councils

4.4 Equality

4.4.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Not applicable.

4.6 Other Implications

4.6.1 None.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 Complaints received in respect of the Arrangements for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Northampton Borough Council Members' Code of Conduct and of Codes of Conduct adopted by Parish Councils.

Francis Fernandes
Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer



**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE – WORK PLAN 2017/2018**

Topic Area	Rationale	Responsibility	Anticipated Meeting Date (s) of Standards Committee
<i>Work Plan 2017/2018 for the Standards Committee</i> 08	To approve the Work Plan 2017/2018 for the Standards Committee	Standards Working Group The Standards Committee	March 2017
<i>Register of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality (Members and Officers)</i>	To consider and review the types of interests that Members and Officers are required to declare; the way such declarations are made and how they are monitored by the Standards Committee.	Standards Working Group The Standards Committee	June 2017
<i>Code of Conduct and arrangements for investigating alleged breaches</i>	To review and update, as necessary, the Code of Conduct and Arrangements for investigating alleged breaches	Standards Working Group The Standards Committee	September 2017

Agenda Item 9



**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE – WORK PLAN 2017/2018**

<i>Topic Area</i>	Rationale	Responsibility	Anticipated meeting date (s)
<i>Organisational Ethics and Culture</i>	To receive an update on the Organisational Change Programme and to comment and input into that Programme into Ethical Conduct Matters.	Standards Working Group The Standards Committee	As appropriate
<i>Parish Councillors and Independent Members</i>	To approve the process for the recruitment of Parish Council Members and Independent Members of the Standards Committee Involvement in the recruitment process as required. To approve the appointment of Parish Councillors and Independent Members to the Standards Committee	The Standards Committee Standards Working Group The Standards Committee	March 2017 June 2017
<i>Training Strategy</i>	To develop and approve the Training Strategy for all Members of the Council in relation to ethical and governance matters and to include specific training for Members of the Standards Committee.	The Standards Committee Standards Working Group	March 2017



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE – WORK PLAN 2017/2018**

Topic Area	Rationale	Responsibility	Anticipated Meeting date (s)
Communications Strategy	To develop and approve a Communications Strategy to promote the work of the Standards Committee and the importance of ethical governance.	Standards Working Group The Standards Committee	September 2017
Whistleblowing Policy	To input into the refresh of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and its implementation.	The Standards Committee Standards Working Group	March 2017
CIPFA International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector	The Committee to receive briefings on the CIPFA International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector in so far as it relates to the work of the Standards Committee.	The Standards Committee	As required



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE – WORK PLAN 2017/2018**

Topic Area	Rationale	Responsibility	Anticipated Meeting date (s)
<i>Ethical and Governance Matters Training</i>	To receive a briefing on training that has taken place for all Members on ethical and governance matters	The Standards Committee	March 2018
<i>Annual Report of the Standards Committee</i>	To receive the Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2017/2018 to include update about delivery of the Work Plan and monitoring data	The Standards Committee	March 2018
<i>Work Plan 2018/2019 for the Standards Committee</i>	To approve the Work Plan 2018/2019 for the Standards Committee	Standards Working Group The Standards Committee	March 2018

NB: The approval of a Work Plan for the Standards Committee will not affect the responsibility or discretion of the Committee during the year, as the Committee can, at subsequent meetings, agree to update the Work Plan, if it is necessary to do so.