

**A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2022**

Councillors Blackman, Ms Ballard, Beavis, Chegwyn, Mrs Huggins, Pepper and Scard

72. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

There were none

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none

74. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2021

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021 be signed as a true and correct record.

75. DEPUTATIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.4

There were none

76. PUBLIC QUESTIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.5

There were none

**77. AMENDMENTS TO CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS AND ARRANGEMENTS
FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF BREACHES OF THE CODE OF
CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS.**

Consideration was given to a report by the Borough Solicitor & Monitoring Officer concerning amendments to the Code of Conduct and Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations of Breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The Borough Solicitor advised the Board that his report included everything to be considered and any amendments had been made in the full knowledge of the Working Group. He pointed out that the pre-filtering stage had been re-introduced, some small changes to the process of a procedural nature had been made, with the main change being the update to the general obligations to bring them in line with the Model Code of the Local Government Association (LGA).

Members wished to thank and congratulate the Working Group on their work in producing the updated Code and procedures and welcomed the re-introduction of the pre-filtering stage.

In answer to Members' questions the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer advised that the paragraph relating to sanctions had not been amended and had formed part of the Constitution for some time, but recognised the difficulty in restricting a Member from the

Town Hall building or their access to Council resources as they have a democratic mandate to represent their constituents.

The Borough Solicitor agreed to liaise with Members to agree to the rewording or the removal of the paragraph whilst the Public Consultation is taking place and before the report is taken to the Policy & Organisation Board.

A Member wished to recognise the work put into the report by the Borough Solicitor and Independent Persons and was pleased that the LGA Model Code had been adopted. They hoped it would be reviewed frequently to reflect developing guidance on harassment and repeat behaviours.

The Borough Solicitor agreed that reviewing at least annually would allow any change to legislation in Standards in Public Life to be reflected and included.

A Member hoped that a group of peers would be able to agree on what is reasonable and proportionate in terms of sanctions. It was recognised that

Members felt that training and education immediately after the election would ensure that Members were aware of what they have signed up to and what is acceptable behaviour in the Chamber and to emphasise how Members should treat each other. It was felt that unless there was a culture that discouraged bullying and harassment it might prove difficult to attract people to becoming Councillors.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- i. approved the changes to the Code of Conduct for Members and Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations of Breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members set out in the Appendix A ('the Code') to this report;
- ii. agreed that the Borough Solicitor & Monitoring Officer undertake a public consultation exercise regarding the revised Code of Conduct for Members for four weeks after the date of this Committee;
- iii. delegates power to the Borough Solicitor & Monitoring Officer to make any minor changes to the Code of Conduct for Members as a result of the public consultation;
- iv. agreed that the results of the public consultation and the Code shall thereafter be reported to the Policy & Organisation Board and Full Council with the Code being proposed for approval as a change of the Constitution.

78. AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT FROM 1ST APRIL TO 14TH JANUARY 2022

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Internal Auditor updating the Committee on the progress of the Audit Plan 2021/22.

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Members were advised that the report mentions the resourcing issues, those audits still to be completed and narrative regarding follow up actions. No new significant issues have arisen.

In answer to a Members question, the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer advised that he and the Assistant Chief Executive were working on drawing up guidelines to assist Portsmouth City Council in producing the Social Media and Communications Strategy.

Members welcomed the report and appreciated that staffing resources had been re-deployed to help with grants. They recognised that it is difficult to meet deadlines when outside agencies are providing services.

Members wished to pass congratulations back to the team for what has been achieved, and express that they appreciated the pressures and understood any slippage in completion.

Officers advised that some of the audits still to be completed in this quarter were in key financial systems, more practiced in being reviewed. Some audits may come out of the schedule, but only if the resource outsourcing continues.

RESOLVED: That the Standards and Governance Committee noted the progress of the Audit Plan 2021/22 from 1st April 2021 to 14th January 2022.

79. ANY OTHER ITEMS

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 6.44 pm

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