

WEST DEVON STANDARDS COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Standards Committee** held on **Tuesday, 9th March, 2021 at 2.00 pm** at the **Teams**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Leech
Vice Chairman Cllr Yelland

Cllr Bolton
Cllr Ratcliffe

Cllr Musgrave

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Edmonds

Officers:

Monitoring Officer

Democratic Services Manager

Senior Case Manager – Democratic Services

1. **Apologies for absence**

* SC 1

There were no apologies for absence

2. **Confirmation of Minutes**

* SC 2

The Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 10 March 2020 were confirmed as a true and correct record.

3. **Declaration of Interest**

* SC 3

The Chairman invited Members to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but there were none made.

4. **LGA Model Code of Conduct**

SC 4

Cllr Edmonds took Members through the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct.

In his introduction, he referred to the Committee for Standards in Public Life's recommendations which had included a Model Code of Conduct being produced by the LGA. One of the aims in having a model Code was to give consistency across all tiers of local government.

The Monitoring Officer added that other Devon district councils were similarly reviewing their Code. A large number of council's across the country were looking to adopt the LGA model. He explained that there had been no changes to sanctions even though the Committee for Standards in Public Life had recommended the Government to make changes to the legislation to enable this to happen.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **RECOMMEND** that the Council adopts the Code (as set out in Appendix C of the presented agenda report) to come into effect from the date of the next Annual Council.

5. **Annual Report 2020/21**

* SC 5

The Committee considered its Annual Report for the period April 2020 to March 2021.

Following an introduction from the lead Hub Committee Member, a debate ensued and particular reference was made to:-

- (a) The 16 Standards complaints received being from mainly two councils. The complaints relating to Lamerton Parish Council had focused on the progress of the local Neighbourhood Plan which had appeared to divide the Parish. Complaints had mainly sought to challenge the way that decisions had been made or the decisions themselves.

The Sampford Courtenay Parish Council complaints had centred on a single issue related to Covid-19 assistance and grant funding for local business, causing a division within the council;

- (b) Monthly Standards update reports from the Monitoring Officer that had not been forthcoming due to staff shortages. In reply, the Committee was advised that a legal services review was currently underway that should give more resource to allow for complaints to be dealt with more promptly;
- (c) A suggestion was made by the Chairman that more Standards Committee meetings should take place, with it being suggested that the Calendar of Meetings should include provision for two meetings per Municipal Year. The Monitoring Officer replied that more support would be given to Governance and to the Monitoring Officer function. As a result, the current process would

improve. Monthly reports would be forthcoming and he was therefore confident that any additional meetings would not be needed.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

the Committee NOTE the content of the report.

The Meeting concluded at 2.35 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
