

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee on Tuesday 16 November 2021

www.oxford.gov.uk



Committee members present:

Councillor Pressel (Chair)	Councillor Lygo (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Mundy
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Smowton
Councillor Fry (for Councillor Humberstone)	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance
Andrew Brown, Committee and Member Services Manager
Catherine Phythian, Committee and Member Services Officer
Emma Griffiths, Lawyer

Also present:

Peter Nowland, BBL Parish Council (Blackbird Leys Ward)
Andrew Mills-Hicks, Independent Person, Independent Person non-voting

Apologies:

Councillor Humberstone, Ballinger, McCleery and Raja sent apologies.
Substitutes are shown above.

Welcome

The Chair introduced Parish Councillor Peter Nowland, the Parish Council representative designate, and welcomed him to the meeting.

The Chair noted that she had asked the Head of Law & Governance to write to the outgoing Parish Council representative, Dorian Hancock, to record the Committee's thanks for his service.

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

8. Appointment of a Parish Council representative as a non-voting member of the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee noted the report and resolved to recommend that Full Council appoints Councillor Peter Nowland of Blackbird Leys Parish Council as the co-

opted, non-voting member of the Standards Committee representing the four Parish Councils in Oxford until May 2022.

9. Code of Conduct: summary of complaints and individual dispensations - 15 June - 31 October 2021

The Standards Committee noted the content of the report.

10. Member training 2022

The Committee and Member Services Manager introduced the report which detailed the review of the delivery of Member training in 2021 and the proposed arrangements for member training in 2022.

The Committee made a number of suggestions for improvements to Member training in 2022:

- Recordings of the Zoom training sessions should be made available to members
- The timing of training sessions needed further consideration; lunchtimes were difficult for members in employment; early evening sessions were difficult for members and officers with children; one option would be to run the evening sessions from 7.30pm
- More emphasis should be given to casework in the training modules; ideally using actual casework scenarios and following the whole process; this would be of particular benefit in relation to safeguarding
- Planning training needed to re-inforce the importance of basing decisions on policy and material considerations; the suggestion of running a mock planning committee as part of the initial training for new members was welcomed
- The option to go on a “walkabout” with service teams should be promoted more widely
- There should be more information and detail on the Council structure and the links between service areas, and between the Council and its wholly owned company Oxford Direct Services.
- Also more information and detail on the personnel, roles and responsibilities of the different service areas; particularly for the Council companies
- In some areas the training content was pitched too low and resulted in low take up by members; the Cabinet Portfolio Holder should be more closely involved in the development of training modules
- Notwithstanding the challenges presented by the pandemic in 2021 it was felt that the “Buddy” system for new members could be more structured in future years

The Standards Committee resolved to:

1. Note the review of member training and development in 2021

2. Endorse the proposals for member training in 2022 including:
 - a) the requirement that Code of Conduct and Planning training will be compulsory for all members following the local elections in May 2022 (instead of in 2023 which is a non-election year); and
 - b) the continued delivery of most member training and briefing sessions remotely over Zoom in 2022.

11. Minutes of the previous meeting - 22 June 2021

The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 as a true and accurate record.

The Head of Law & Governance said that work on the new Code of Conduct for Members was on-going and that she expected to bring it to the Committee early in 2022 for recommendation to Council for adoption.

12. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted that, in addition to the next scheduled meeting on 23 March 2022, it would be necessary to convene an extra meeting in January 2022 in order to consider the proposals for the new Code of Conduct.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.25 pm

Chair

Date:

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.