

STANDARDS COMMITTEE CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Council	28 March 2024
Report Author	Peter Tucker (Co-opted Independent Member)
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Executive Summary:

The Chair's annual report summarises and comments on the work of the Standards Committee for the period 1 March 2023 - 19 March 2024, when the report was published.

Recommendation(s):

That members note the report.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

There are no financial or value for money implications arising from this report.

Legal

The role of the Standards Committee is to promote high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members in accordance with the Councillor's' Code of Conduct . The Code of Conduct is adopted under section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 and is based on the 7 principles of Public life under section 28(1) of the Localism Act.

This report relates to the Committee's function to monitor the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct.

Corporate

The role of the Standards Committee is to promote high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct. This report relates to the Committee's function to monitor the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

There are no particular equalities considerations arising from this report.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- **Priority five:** *To work efficiently for you*

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This was my 3rd Annual Report as Chair of the Standards Committee.
- 1.2 With the advent of a General Election can I please remind members on their use of social media.
- 1.3 There was an ever growing number of media platforms in the public domain and with this in mind the Social Media Policy and its use is currently under review.

2.0 Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP)

Committee agenda papers and minutes are available on the Council's website (www.thanet.gov.uk). Attendance details for 2023/24 are as follows:

Members	9th November 2023	27 February 2024
Peter Tucker	Present	Present
Councillor Austin	Present	Present
Councillor Britcher	Present	Present
Councillor Everitt	Present	Apologies, sent representative
Councillor W. Scobie	Present	Present
Councillor Scott	Absent	Absent
Michael Clarke	Absent	Apologies
Peter Lorenzo	Present	Present
Carolyn Ruston	Present	Apologies

- 2.1 CRWP met on 9 November 2023 and 27 February 2024. We discussed the following: Key decision definitions, the council's policy framework, amendments to the council's procedure regarding the frequency of questions, contract procedure rules, councillor / officer protocol and revisions to the constitutional change process.

3.0 Standards Committee

- 3.1 The Standards Committee meetings scheduled for 31 May 2023, 12 September 2023 and 9 November 2023 were cancelled due to lack of business. The Standards Committee met on 20 November 2023 and 7 March 2024. The Standards Committee meetings discussed the Key Decision Definitions, Review of the Council's Policy Framework, Amendments Council Procedure Rules Regarding Frequency of Questions, Contract Procedure Rules, Councillor / Officer Protocol and Revised Constitution Change Process.

Committee agenda papers and minutes are available on the Council's website (www.thanet.gov.uk). Attendance details for 2023/24 are as follows:

Members	31st May 2023	12th September 2023	9 November 2023	20th November 2023	7th March 2024
Peter Tucker	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Present	Present
Councillor Austin	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Present	Apologies
Councillor Bayford	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Present	Present
Councillor Crittenden	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Present	Present
Councillor d'Abbro	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Absent	Apologies
Councillor Duckworth	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Absent	Present
Councillor Fellows	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Present	Present
Councillor Ovenden	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Present	Present
Parish Councillor Quittenden	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Absent	Present
Michael Clarke	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Apologies	Present
Peter Lorenzo	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Present	Present
Carolyn Ruston	Cancelled	Cancelled	Cancelled	Absent	Present

4.0 Complaints about Member Behaviour Considered by a Standards Sub Committee of Thanet District Council 2023/24

- 4.1 The Council received 24 complaints raised under the Members' Code of Conduct between 1st March 2023 and 19th March 2024.
- 4.2 Of the 24 complaints received in this period, two were considered to be corporate complaints not concerning councillors and were therefore referred to the corporate complaints system. Nine were considered not to meet the jurisdiction test. Six complaints are not yet concluded. Seven cases were therefore progressed for consideration by a sub-committee.

- 4.3 Of those assessed by sub-committees, one complaint was referred to the police for investigation and an independent investigator appointed by the council. One complaint had been referred to an independent investigator appointed by the council. Additionally, two resulted in a decision of no further action due to the complaint being unfounded.
- 4.4 Of the remaining 4 complaints, all were considered to be suitable for the informal resolution process. The sub-committee made various recommendations back to the complainants and subject members. No complaints were referred for further investigation.
- 4.5 The sub-committee dealt with a number of complaints from both councillors and members of the public about allegations relating to disclosures of interests, particularly relating to posts on social media sites.

5.0 Thanks

- 5.1. I thank the monitoring officers, staff in Democratic Services and the other independent persons for their support and help over the last year.

Annex List

Annex 1: List of Complaints 2023-2024

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell (Director of Corporate Services)

Legal: Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy and Monitoring Officer)