

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference, Constitution, Rules and Procedures

Role

The Committee will:

1. Promote and maintain high standards of conduct and ethical governance by members and co-opted Members of the Authority.
2. Consider allegations of failure to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct as are referred to it; to consider reports or recommendations from the Monitoring Officer and to conduct hearings into such allegations and take such action and impose such sanctions on behalf of the Authority as are required, permitted or appropriate.
3. Oversee the Registers of Members' Interests and oversee the effectiveness of the Authority's procedures for investigating and responding to complaints about Members.
4. Agree, keep under review and revise the procedures from time to time for dealing with complaints against Members.
5. Assist Members and where appropriate, co-opted Members to observe the Member Code of Conduct.
6. Advise the Authority on the re-adoption or revision of the Member Code of Conduct.
7. Advise the Authority on the adoption or revision of the Protocol for Member-Officer Relations.
8. Monitor the operation of the Member Code of Conduct.
9. Advise, train or arrange to train the Members and co-opted Members of the Authority on matters relating to the Member Code of Conduct.
10. Grant dispensations to Members, from requirements relating to interests set out in the Member Code of Conduct, as referred by the Monitoring Officer.
11. Receive reports and comment on complaints procedures and/or reports from the Local Government Ombudsman or external auditors, which are relevant to the Standards Committee's responsibilities.
12. Consider the compliance of the Constitution with the ethical framework.

13. Co-opt independent non-voting members on to the Committee.
14. Appoint Independent Persons for the purposes of the ethical framework under the Localism Act 2011.
15. Establish a Hearings Sub-Committee to consider investigation reports and to conduct hearings on its behalf.
16. To grant approval for a Member's non-attendance at meetings pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Hearing Sub-Committee

17. The Hearing Sub-Committee will hold a hearing in relation to a matter referred to it by the Monitoring Officer and may make one of the following findings, that:
 - a. the Member who was the subject of the hearing had not failed to comply with the Code of Conduct of the Authority;
 - b. the Member who was the subject of the hearing had failed to comply with the Code of Conduct of the Authority but that no action needs to be taken in respect of the matters which were considered at the hearing; or
 - c. the Member who was the subject of the hearing had failed to comply with the Code of Conduct of the Authority and that the suggested sanction should be imposed.

Constitution

18. The Standards Committee shall comprise 7 Members, which will include two independent co-opted non-voting members.
19. In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, political balance will apply.
20. Group Leaders, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority are not eligible to serve on the Standards Committee.
21. The quorum of the Committee will be 3 Members.
22. The Hearing Sub-Committee will comprise 3 Members and at least one co-opted, non-voting, non-councillor.

Rules and Procedures

23. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected by the Authority
24. The Committee will meet at least once a year.
25. The Committee will submit an annual report to the Authority each June.

26. The Committee Chair will report proceedings of the Panel to the Authority.
27. The minutes and reports of the Committee will be available for public inspection, except those documents classified as exempt.
28. The Committee will be advised by the Monitoring Officer and other officers and advisors as necessary.
29. When assessing complaints alleging breaches of the Code of Conduct the Panel shall have regard to the Process for Managing Standards Complaints under the Localism Act 2011.
30. The Hearing Sub Committee meetings will normally be held in public with the right of attendance for all Members, public and press, except during consideration of exempt business.
31. An agenda, together with reports will be made available at least 5 clear working days before each formal meeting.