

Standards Committee

Thursday 6 October 2022

10.00 am Luttrell Room - County Hall,
Taunton



To: The Members of the Standards Committee

Cllr J Bailey (Chair), Cllr N Cavill, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr B Smedley, Alan Hemsley, Paul Hooper, Robin Horton and David Stripp

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend meetings of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer and Strategic Manager - Governance and Democratic Services – 28 September 2022

For further information about the meeting, please contact Andrew Melhuish andrew.melhuish@somerset.gov.uk or Clare Rendell clare.rendell@somerset.gov.uk or

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers



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AGENDA

Item Standards Committee - 10.00 am Thursday 6 October 2022

****Public guidance notes contained in agenda annexe****

1 **Apologies for Absence**

To receive members apologies

2 **Declarations of Interest**

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the [Council Website](#)

The Statutory Register of Member's Interests can be inspected via request to the Democratic Service Team. Any new or updated declarations of interest will be received.

3 **Public Question Time**

The Chair will allow members of the public to ask a question or make a statement about any matter on the agenda for this meeting. **These questions may be taken during the meeting, when the relevant agenda item is considered, at the Chair's discretion.**

4 **Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee** (Pages 7 - 10)

To consider the report

5 **Update from Standards Committee Workshop on 14 September 2022**

To summarise the areas that were discussed and how it has helped inform priority areas for the Committee to review over its meetings in 2022/23

6 **Work Programme 2022/23**

To debate priority areas for the Committee to review.

7 **Any other business**

The Chair may raise any items of urgent business.

Guidance notes for the meeting

1. **Council Public Meetings**

The former regulations that enabled virtual committee meetings ended on 7 May 2021. Since then, all committee meetings need to return to face-to-face meetings. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers to attend in person, along with some provision for any public speakers. Provision will be made wherever possible for those who do not need to attend in person including the public and press who wish to view the meeting to be able to do so virtually.

2. **Inspection of Papers**

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers.

Printed agendas can also be viewed in reception at the Council offices at County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY.

3. **Members' Code of Conduct requirements**

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

4. **Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

5. **Public Question Time**

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

Members of public wishing to speak or ask a question will need to attend in person or if unable can submit their question or statement in writing for an officer to read out.

After entering the Council building you may be taken to a waiting room before being taken to the meeting for the relevant agenda item to ask your question. After the agenda item has finished you will be asked to leave the meeting for other members of the public to attend to speak on other items.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 30 minutes in total (20 minutes for meetings other than County Council meetings).

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with many people wishing to attend the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

Provision will be made for anybody who wishes to listen in on the meeting only to follow the meeting online.

6. **Meeting Etiquette for participants**

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)

- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask Participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording, and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting.

Please contact the Committee Administrator or Democratic Services on 01823 357628 or email democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk if you have any questions or concerns.

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Somerset County Council
Standards Committee
– 6 October 2022

Standards Committee Terms of Reference

Lead Officer: Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer and Strategic Manager–Governance & Democratic Services

Author: Clare Rendell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Contact Details: clare.rendell@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Standards Committee was formed following the Annual General Meeting in May 2022. Its functions include responsibility for promoting high standards of conduct by Members, Co-opted Members and Officers and for the policies and processes which support this aim; Advising on the induction and training of Members and Co-opted Members on standards of conduct; Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and recommends any changes considered necessary to the Code to the Council for approval; Has responsibility for overseeing the Standards of Conduct for officers and recommending any changes considered necessary to the Council for approval; Managing the members' and officers' registers of interests and gifts and hospitality; and Monitoring the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and making recommendations to the Council in respect of any proposed changes.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **That the Committee notes the Terms of Reference as attached in Appendix 1.**

3. Background

- 3.1. At the Annual General Meeting on 25 May 2022, the Council approved to dissolve the existing Constitution and Standards Committee and establish a new Standards Committee.
- 3.2. With the establishment of a new committee, the first order of business for the committee to consider is its Terms of Reference that were approved at the Annual General Meeting on 25 May 2022.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1. The Committee meetings are open to all County Councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings.

5. Background papers

- 5.1. Further information can be found in the agenda pack for the Annual General Meeting held on 25 May 2022 and the Council's Constitution, both published on the council's website.

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

Appendix 1

STANDARDS COMMITTEE (5 elected members and 5 co-opted members)

Chair: John Bailey

Membership – elected members: (5 member committee political proportionality requirements waved by the Council – all political groups represented – 1 member each)

Norman Cavill
Martin Dimery
Brian Smedley
Hugh Davies
John Bailey

Groups / Seats Con (1) Green(1) Labour (1) Independent (1) Lib Dem (1)

Membership – co-opted non-voting members (5):

Alan Hemsley
Paul Hooper
Robin Horton
David Stripp
Vacancy

STANDARDS COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS:

The Standards Committee is expected to be apolitical in carrying out its functions and its responsibilities. The Committee promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by elected Members and Co-opted Members of Council and Council bodies. The Committee:-

- a) Has responsibility for promoting high standards of conduct by Members, Co-opted Members and Officers and for the policies and processes which support this aim.
- b) Advises on the induction and training of Members and Co-opted Members on standards of conduct ;
- c) Monitors the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and recommends any changes considered necessary to the Code to the Council for approval.
- d) Has responsibility for overseeing the Standards of Conduct for officers and recommending any changes considered necessary to the Council for approval
- e) Manages the members' and officers' registers of interests and gifts / hospitality;
- f) Monitors the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and make recommendations to the Council in respect of any proposed changes.

The Committee has no role in considering or determining member complaints.

FORM AND COMPOSITION:

The Constitution and Standards Committee comprises of 1 elected member per political group (currently 5 elected Members) [but no Cabinet Members] and 5 Co-opted Members without voting rights. Substitutes will be permitted for the elected members

appointed to the Committee. The Chair is appointed by the Council on an annual basis. Council has agreed to waive the political proportionality requirements for appointments to the Committee to enable all of the political groups on the Council to be represented.

QUORUM:

A minimum of 3 elected members is required for a valid meeting of the Committee.

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