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Ethics Committee

Meeting of held on Thursday, 9 December 2021 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick (Chair);

Councillors Mario Creatura, Clive Fraser, Helen Redfern and Karen Jewitt
Independent Members Don Axcell, Jennifer Gordon, Ashok Kumar and Alan Malarkey

Apologies: Councillor Joy Prince, Anne Smith

PART A

1/21 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

2/21 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

3/21 Member Code of Conduct

The Ethics Committee considered a [report](#) in which it was asked to agree guidance to accompany the newly adopted Members' Code of Conduct which reflects national guidance produced by the Local Government Association. The Committee received an introduction from the Governance Improvement Adviser, Heather Wills.

In response to queries raised by the Committee, the following was clarified:

- The Council Monitoring Officer advised if the Member Code of Conduct was included in the Council Constitution then it would carry more weight.

During the consideration of the recommendations, the Committee discussed the following:

- Whether having the Code on the council's website would be adequate.

An amendment was moved and seconded to amend point iii) to read " we agree to recommend that the Guidance is available on the council's website." The amendment was put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed to note points i) and ii) and that point iii) is amended as above.

The Committee noted the request for small group of Members from the Committee to work with officers to review the Protocol on Staff-Councillor Relations.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed that Councillor Fraser will represent the administration and that a representative from the minority group will be nominated.

4/21 Access to Information Protocol

The Ethics Committee considered a [report](#) which detailed a revised draft Access to Information Protocol has been prepared, informed by comments from Ethics Committee, Scrutiny Chairs, recent reviews conducted at Croydon Council and advice from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The Committee received an introduction from the Governance Improvement Adviser, Heather Wills.

In response to queries raised by the Committee, the following was clarified:

The officers were recommending that the 10 day deadline for a response to councillor requested would be the maximum and that in most cases the information would be supplied more quickly.

If a request for information was refused due to sensitivity or confidentiality, then members would be told of the reasons for that decision being made.

A vote to accept the recommendations was suggested. The vote was carried.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed to the recommendations set out in the report.

5/21 Dispensation Applications for Members

The Ethics Committee considered a [report](#) which detailed that following statutory amendments to the ethics regime, full Council adopted a new Code of Conduct in 2011 and delegated to the Monitoring Officer and the Ethics Committee the power to consider dispensations under the new ethics regime. The Committee received an introduction from the Monitoring Officer, John Jones confirming that there were no items to be brought to the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed to note the report.

6/21 Complaint Monitoring and Associated Matters

The Ethics Committee considered a [report](#) which detailed that the Council has determined that the Ethics Committee shall be responsible for receiving and considering reports on matters of probity and ethics. This is the quarterly report to the Ethics Committee to update members on any complaints or investigations undertaken by the Monitoring Officer during the last quarter to 31 October 2021 subject to what is set out at paragraph 3.9 below. The previous report, an annual report up to and including complaints received and considered by 31 July 2021 is accessible here:

https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s32625/Rpt_Quarterly%20Complaints_%20Ethics%20Cttee_Sept_%202021final.pdf

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The Committee received an introduction from the Monitoring Officer, John Jones confirming that there were no items to be brought to the Committee.

In response to queries raised by the Committee, the following was clarified:

That the Council is not able to control the type of complaints that are received from members of the public.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed to note the report.

7/21 Work Programme

The Ethics Committee considered a [report](#) which detailed the Ethics Committee Work Programme for 2021/22. This Work Programme will be considered at every meeting of the Committee to enable it to respond to issues of concern and incorporate any additional items. The Committee received an introduction from the Monitoring Officer, John Jones

In response to queries raised by the Committee, the following was clarified:

That the Register of Gifts and Hospitality should include anything that could be seen as being given as for a particular reason to protect from any possible issues in the future.

The amount is £50 but that this is a cumulative figure.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed to note the report.

8/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.32pm.

Signed:

Date:

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