

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**17th November 2021**

**Present:** Councillor Andrew Roberts in the Chair

Councillors A. Amos, Lamb (Vice-Chair),  
Lawrance, Stanley and Stephen

**Also in Attendance:**

Mr Dave Carney, Warndon Parish Councillor  
Mr Roger Knight, St. Peter's Parish  
Councillor

Mrs Dawn Merriman, Warndon Parish  
Councillor

Mr Alan Tidy, St. Peter's Parish Councillor  
Mr Ray Needham JP, Co-opted Member

**Officers:** Sian Stroud, Monitoring Officer

### **10 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor Stanley for Councillor Mitchell.

### **11 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **12 Public Participation**

Chris Thorp addressed the Committee about the Council's complaints policy and procedures. He made a number of points by way of follow-up to his comments at the last meeting of the Committee, in summary as follows:

- The complaints policy should be extended to ensure that it can be used by members of all volunteer groups that exist, or which may be formed in the future. From his experience of complaints regarding allotments, this would be of great importance in site representative cases. Access to the policy would also prevent a situation whereby a complaint is made to the person being complained about.
- In respect of recent complaints lodged by Mr Thorp during the last year or so regarding other Council Volunteers (Site Reps) in the Forum Group, he said that it seemed clear that Nina Warrington's finding of: "What occurs in the Allotments Forum, stays in the Forum" was unsafe due to her having entirely overlooked the established policy that: "Any complaint should be fully investigated in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure." He felt this policy had not been followed in respect of these complaints, and he asked for them to be reviewed, and a considered response be provided to him.
- He also raised the question: "Without access to the Council's Complaints Policy how can anyone seek redress within their Group, especially in cases where the Group Leader, also being a Volunteer, is involved?" He believes it

is essential that volunteers with clearly specified roles have the right to use the Council's Complaints Policy.

- Site representatives should not act on behalf of the Council as they are representatives of the tenants, and they do not have "duties" but "roles" and the site agreements should be amended to reflect this.
- Several site representatives have not been formally inducted and are therefore not aware of their responsibilities with regard to data protection and the sharing of personal information.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Thorp for his representations and informed him that a written response will be provided in due course. Mr Thorp agreed to send a copy of his representations to the Chair.

### 13 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

### 14 **Local Government And Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2021**

The Committee considered the Annual Review Letter of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) for the period covering 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The Monitoring Officer highlighted the main findings.

In summary, the overall number of complaints and enquiries received by the Ombudsman about Worcester City Council had decreased dramatically from 17 in 2019/20 to 5 in 2020/21. However, the Ombudsman did not receive any new casework between March and June 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the number of cases where an investigation was carried out by the Ombudsman decreased from 5 in 2019/20 to 2 in 2020/21. Both were upheld. The Monitoring Officer commented on each of the cases, the findings, lessons learned and actions taken to improve the relevant Council practices and procedures.

Since the period covering these decisions, all senior Officers investigating complaints have been given accredited complaints handling training by the LG&SCO.

The Monitoring Officer responded to questions on the report.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to note the Annual Review Letter of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) for the period covering 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 for information and comment.**

### 15 **Reports of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

The Committee were informed that no reports had been received from the Ombudsman since the last meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report.**

**16 Complaints Made Under the Members' Code of Conduct**

The Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer on complaints made under the Members' Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer advised that, since the last meeting of the Committee in June 2021, 2 complaints have been received and each was currently under assessment.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report.**

**17 Registers of Members' and Officers' Gifts and Hospitality and Register of Interests**

The Committee were given the opportunity to review the registers of Members' and Officers' gifts and hospitality and register of interests.

**18 Any Other Business**

None.

**Duration of the meeting:** 7.00p.m. – 7.27p.m.

Chairman at the meeting on  
8th March 2022

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