

Standards Committee  
2 September 2019

## WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on Monday 2 September 2019 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors T.Kingsbury (Chairman)  
A.Chesterman, S.Thusu and P.Zukowskyj

OFFICIALS Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N. Long)  
PRESENT: Head of Law and Administration (M. Martinus)  
Principal Governance Officer (A. Marston)

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### 7. APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Association of Local Councils Representative, Bill Morris.

### 8. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 9. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor P.Zukowskyj declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12 on the Agenda as appropriate by virtue of being a Member of Hertfordshire County Council.

### 10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN - ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER

Report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance), which detailed the number of complaints and enquiries received about the Council and the decisions that the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) made during the period 2018/2019. (Appendix A). The report also showed a breakdown of the upheld complaints and showed how these were remedied. Appendices B & C illustrated cases whereby recommendations from the LGO remedied the fault and those where the Council had offered satisfactory remedy during the local complaints process. The data included in the report had been published on the LGO's website.

The Council had a duty to report to Members on adverse outcomes of complaints formally investigated by the LGO. Members considered the five complaints that were subject to a detailed investigation, two were upheld and full details of these decisions were attached to the report as Appendix D.

Members queried whether audits of the service areas involved in the upheld cases would be an effective way of reviewing the processes.

RESOLVED

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The report was noted along with a recommendation for the upheld cases to be referred onto the relevant Corporate Directors to consider whether an audit of the service areas involved should be included in the audit plan.

11. SURVEILLANCE UPDATE 2019

Verbal report from the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance), which provided an update on the Council's use of surveillance powers. The Council has powers to investigate a range of criminal offences and like all local authorities it can utilise powers to undertake surveillance to assist with those investigations in certain prescribed circumstances.

Members were informed that since their last update the council has not had to authorise the use of any covert surveillance. The Senior Responsible Officer, Single Point of Contact and two other authorising officers are keeping up to date with training; officers have delivered general open RIPA training to 31 staff since the start of the year.

It is very important that we have systems and processes in place relevant to surveillance carried out online and with that in mind a new, shorter training course is being developed focusing on this area. The RIPA policy will also be updated to reflect this.

Members asked whether covert surveillance could be used in dealing with fly tipping hot-spots in the borough but were advised that this would be unlikely. The council can only authorise use of directed surveillance under RIPA to prevent or detect criminal offences that are either punishable, whether on summary conviction or indictment, by a maximum term of at least six months imprisonment or are related to the underage sale of alcohol and tobacco. Overt surveillance in these instances is advised to prevent fly tipping in particular areas however it was noted that this could just move the issue to another location.

RESOLVED

The update was noted.

12. WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

Report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) on the work programme following the amendments requested at the last meeting.

The Constitution Review Group will be looking at a revised Code of Conduct for Members in October which will need to be brought to Standards Committee. This may be available by the scheduled December meeting but if it is not, and no other business arises, then that meeting will be cancelled.

RESOLVED

That the work programme for 2019/20 be approved.

Meeting ended at 7.53 pm  
AM