

The Report of the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee met on 23 September 2016. Present:- County Councillor Caroline Patmore (in the Chair); County Councillors Helen Grant, David Jeffels and Peter Sowray; together with Independent Person for Standards Louise Holroyd in attendance.

Annual Report: The Standards Committee considered, and approved, its Annual Report for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The Annual Report is appended.

The Standards Committee RECOMMENDS:

That the Annual Report of the Standards Committee, as set out in Appendix 1, be noted.

CAROLINE PATMORE
Chairman

County Hall,
NORTHALLERTON.

1 November 2016

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

9 November 2016

Annual Report of the Standards Committee

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Authority with an Annual Report on the work of the Standards Committee from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Standards Committee was established in 2012 as part of the ethical framework for local government introduced by the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.2 The Committee has previously agreed that it would be helpful to publish an Annual Report on its work to the Authority in order to raise the profile of the Committee and strengthen awareness of its work and ethical standards generally. An Annual Report also assists in discharging the Authority's statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct and also ensures that the Authority has an overview of work undertaken by the Committee in discharging the Authority's standards responsibilities.

3.0 THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 The ethical framework introduced under the 2011 Act includes:
- (a) **The Standards Committee:** The Committee usually meets twice per annum, although only met on 21 September 2015 for the period in question, its meeting scheduled for 18 March 2016 being rescheduled for 15 April 2016). The Committee is responsible for standards and standards complaints handling issues, the granting of dispensations and also has a role in relation to issues raised by or in relation to persistent and/or vexatious complainants.
 - (b) **Independent Persons for Standards:** Each relevant authority must appoint at least one "Independent Person". In 2012, the Authority approved the appointments of Mrs Hilary Gilbertson MBE and Mrs Louise Holroyd as Independent Persons for the Authority. The Independent Persons are invited to all meetings of the Standards Committee and are consulted on all key standards matters.
 - (c) **A statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct**
 - (d) **Members' Code of Conduct**
 - (e) **Register of Members' Interests** (hard copy and online)
 - (f) **Complaint Handling**
 - (g) **Ethical Statements**
 - (h) **Standards Bulletin**
- 3.2 The **Monitoring Officer** supports the Committee in its work, including maintaining the Register of Members' Interests and dealing with any complaints made against Members under the local standards regime.

4.0 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

4.1 The work undertaken by the Standards Committee between the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 is set out below:

- (a) Review of ethical framework developments: the Committee has considered developments in the national standards regime and provided guidance to Members, for example in relation to documents published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, for example its Annual Report for 2014/15 and Business Plan 2015/16.
- (b) Dispensations: the Committee considered a potential dispensation issue with regard to traffic regulation orders and Area Committees. The Committee resolved that, in principle, Members of Area Committees should be granted a dispensation to discuss Traffic Regulation Orders when their interests relates to their home or working address and that the decision on individual applications for dispensations from elected Members be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with an Independent Person of the Standards Committee. Any dispensations granted should be granted for four years or to the end of the term of the Council, whichever comes first.
- (c) Training: The Committee ensures that Members receive appropriate training to maintain their awareness of ethical standards. Training during 2015 included a training session by the Monitoring Officer in May 2015 to Authority Members on standards issues, with a focus on the declaration and registration of interests and considering the first prosecution nationally in relation to a failure to declare interests.
- (d) Register of Members' Interests: The Register of Members' Interests is also published on the Authority's website. The Committee monitors the operation of the Register.
- (e) Standards Bulletin: The Committee has issued one Standards Bulletin during the period covered by this Report, aimed at keeping Members and Officers apprised of developments in the ethical regime.
- (f) Complaints: The Committee receives a Complaints Update report at each meeting. During the period covered by this Report, there were four complaints received that Authority Members may have breached the Authority's Members' Code of Conduct. Of those four complaints:
 - Two were handled via informal resolution and an apology was given by the subject Member in one of the cases;
 - In the other two cases, no action was required.
- (g) Liaison with neighbouring authorities: consideration was given to the arrangement of a further meeting of neighbouring authority Standards Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Independent Persons for Standards. The Monitoring Officer has liaised with the neighbouring authority Heads of Legal/Monitoring Officers' Group.

4.2 The Committee will continue its work in the promotion of high ethical standards and further involvement in training of officers and Members at an appropriate stage.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the Authority receives and notes the Annual Report of the Standards Committee.

BARRY KHAN
Monitoring Officer

Background Papers:
Minutes of and reports to the Standards Committee
23 September 2016