

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

18 September 2020

Annual Report of Standards Committee**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To present Members with a draft Annual Report of the work of the Standards Committee for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The Committee previously resolved that each Annual Report should be 'light touch' and as brief as possible

3.0 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

- 3.1 A draft Annual Report of the Committee, for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 is attached for Members' consideration and approval at **Appendix 1**. The Report, if approved by the Committee, will be presented to a future meeting of the Authority.
- 3.2 Members' views are welcomed.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Subject to any comments Members may have, the Committee is asked to approve the draft Annual Report for presentation to a future meeting of the Authority.

BARRY KHAN

Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer

Background Papers:

- The Localism Act 2011
- Minutes of NYCC Standards Committee meetings

County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

9 September 2020

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 November 2020

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 2019 to 31 March 2020.

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:
- i. **The Standards Committee:** The Committee usually meets twice per annum. During the period in question, the Committee met on 20 September 2019 and 6 March 2020. The Committee is responsible for:
 - standards;
 - 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.
 - ii. **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.
 - iii. **A statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct**
 - iv. **Members' Code of Conduct**
 - v. **Register of Members' Interests** (hard copy and online)
 - vi. **Complaint Handling**
 - vii. **Ethical Statements**
 - viii. **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 2019 to 31 March 2020 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:
- i. documents published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, for example its Review on Artificial Intelligence and Public Standards, its Annual Report 2018-19, its Report re Intimidation in Public life, its open letter to public office holders re the importance of implementing the Nolan Principles;
 - ii. the LGA draft model Code of Conduct for Members;
 - iii. the LGA Guide for Councillors to handling intimidation; and
 - iv. the Cabinet Office Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies.
- (b) Members' attendance at Committees: the Committee considered and noted statistical information relating to Members' attendance at meetings of the County Council and its Committees.
- (c) Dispensations: the Committee considered and reviewed two dispensations granted by the Monitoring Officer under his delegated powers to grant dispensations (after consultation with the Independent Persons for Standards) where the timescales were such that a Standards Committee meeting could not be convened and the Monitoring Officer had consulted every available Member of the Standards Committee, all of whom consented to the granting of the dispensations.
- (d) Training: The Committee ensures that Members receive appropriate training to maintain their awareness of ethical standards. Training during 2019/20 included training for Members at a Member seminar session re the Members' Code of Conduct and the Ethical Framework and training for Members at a Member seminar session re Standards and Governance Update.
- (e) 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.
- (f) Standards Bulletin: The Committee has issued two Standards Bulletins during the period covered by this Report, aimed at keeping Members and Officers apprised of developments in the ethical regime. Copies of the Bulletin have also been requested by, and circulated to, other authorities.
- (g) Complaints: The Committee receives a Complaints Update report at each meeting. During the period covered by this Report, there were ten complaints received that Members may have breached the Authority's Members' Code of Conduct, however four of the complaints were in relation to same subject Member and matter. None of the ten complaints was referred for investigation, however one complaint was dealt with by local settlement under informal resolution, namely that the subject Member should issue a formal apology,

undergo suitable diversity training as directed by the Monitoring Officer and that the assessment record should be published on the Council website.

- (h) Liaison with neighbouring authorities: The Monitoring Officer has continued to liaise with the neighbouring authority Heads of Legal/Monitoring Officers' Group and attend meetings of the Group.
- (i) Standards Committee Annual Report: an Annual Report of the Committee covering the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 was presented to full Council on 13 November 2019.

4.2 At the Standards Committee meeting on 20 September 2019, the Chair referred to the death of serving Standards Committee Member County Councillor John Blackie, who had passed away since the last meeting of the Committee. Members stood in silence in tribute to his service to the Committee

4.3 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.

CAROLINE PATMORE
Chair of NYCC Standards Committee

Background Papers:
Minutes of and reports to the Standards Committee

18 September 2020