

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

20 September 2019

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 2018 to 31 March 2019.

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 2018 to 31 March 2019 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

11 September 2019

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 November 2019

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 2018 to 31 March 2019.

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. During the period in question, the Committee met on 21 September 2018, 3 January 2019 and 8 March 2019. 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 2018 to 31 March 2019 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 report on 'The Continuing Importance of Ethical standards for Public Service Providers, its Annual Report 2017-18 and its review of Local Government Standards.
- (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 granted various dispensation requests.
- (d) Training: The Committee ensures that Members receive appropriate training to maintain their awareness of ethical standards. Training during 2018/9 included training for Members at a Member seminar session re Predetermination and Social Media.
- (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. During the period in question, the Committee also considered issues around the registration of sensitive interests.
- (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 four complaints received that Members may have breached the Authority's Members' Code of Conduct. Of those four complaints, in three cases no action was required to be taken. The other case was dealt with under informal resolution whereby the Member further apologised and undertook diversity training.
- (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 2017 to 31 March 2018 was presented to full Council on 14 November 2018.

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.

CAROLINE PATMORE
Chair of NYCC Standards Committee

Background Papers:
Minutes of and reports to the Standards Committee

11 September 2019