

The Report of the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee met on 21 September 2018. Present:- County Councillor Caroline Patmore (in the Chair); County Councillors John Blackie, Andy Paraskos, Peter Sowray and Cliff Trotter; together with Independent Persons for Standards Hilary Gilbertson MBE and Louise Holroyd in attendance.

Annual Report: The Standards Committee considered, and approved, its Annual Report for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. 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.

November 2018

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

14 November 2018

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 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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 15 September 2017 and 18 April 2018 (rescheduled from 2 March 2018). 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 2017 to 31 March 2018 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 Ethical Standards for Providers of Public Services Follow Up, its review of MPs' outside interests, its review of Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates, its review of Local Government Standards;
 - ii. the Equality and Human Rights Commission Voluntary Principles on Standards for Political Discourse;
 - iii. the DCLG consultation on Councillor Disqualification Reform;
 - iv. the new Cabinet Office Ministerial Code.
- (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. It agreed that the matter of addressing attendance issues should be left in the hands of the relevant Group Leaders.
- (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 2017/8 included refresher standards training to the Standards Committee on 15 September 2017.
- (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 two complaints received that Members may have breached the Authority's Members' Code of Conduct. Regarding the two complaints, no action was required in either case.
- (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 2016 to 31 March 2017 was presented to full Council on 8 November 2017.
- (j) Attendance by the Chair of the Committee and Independent Persons at the Regional Meeting of Standards Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Independent Persons on 3 April 2017 at North Tyneside.

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 2018