

# NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

9 November 2022

**PRESENT:** - Cllr N Poole (Chairman)

N Poole (Chairman), J England (Vice-Chair), S Swift, C O'Sullivan and D Wells

Mr R Johnson (Independent Person)

The meeting was held at the Conference Room, Church Square House.

### 429 **SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)**

Cllr Swift substituted for Cllr Ali.

### 430 **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND PERSONAL OR PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS.**

Cllr Wells declared a personal interest as a member of ERNLLCA

### 431 **TO TAKE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 JULY 2022 AS A CORRECT RECORD AND AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN.**

**Resolved** – That the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 14 July 2022, having been printed and circulated amongst the members, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chairman

### 432 **ERNLLCA - INFORMAL UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER.**

Tom Clay, the Executive Officer - East Riding & Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association (ERNLLCA), introduced themselves to the Committee, and provided a short, verbal presentation on ERNLLCA's aims, services, team, and some ideas for how they worked in partnership with North Lincolnshire Council. Tom stated that they wished to build upon this relationship, strengthening local arrangements and services, and improving the governance of democratic institutions across the area.

Members discussed a number of issues with Tom, such as training and support for clerks, access to ERNLLCA's services, and inviting ERNLLCA to meetings such as the Town and Parish Liaison meeting. The Monitoring Officer identified several areas for further development, such as involving ERNLLCA in training and mediation.

**Resolved** – (a) That Tom Clay be thanked for their attendance and presentation, (b) that ERNLLCA receive an invitation to all future meetings of the Town and Parish Liaison Meeting; and (c) that discussions continue about mutually beneficial working arrangements between the Standards Committee and ERNLLCA in order to strengthen local democracy.

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**433 RENEWAL OF DISPENSATION - STEEL INDUSTRY**

The Director: Governance & Communities submitted a report requesting that the Standards Committee consider renewing the dispensation granted to all elected members on 6 November 2015, and renewed each subsequent year, concerning motions related to British Steel (formerly Tata Steel).

The Monitoring Officer explained that this dispensation had been granted in November 2015, and renewed annually, in order to participate in any motion or discussion concerning British Steel and the steel industry. Further details, including the terms of the dispensation, were set out in the report.

As the dispensation was due to expire on 10 November 2022 the committee was asked to consider extending the dispensation for a further twelve months, taking into account the continued interest in the steel industry, and the likelihood that the council would wish to discuss related issues.

**Resolved** – That pursuant to section 33 (2) (c) of the Localism Act 2011, the dispensation granted by the committee on 6 November 2015, and subsequently renewed annually, be renewed for a further twelve month period.

**434 DEBATE, NOT HATE - LGA PROJECT**

The Director: Governance and Communities submitted a report informing the Standards Committee of the recent Local Government Association (LGA) publication “Debate Not Hate” on preventing abuse and intimidation in public and political settings. The report also invited the Committee to consider the relevant recommendations, and to implement any measures as deemed necessary.

The report described how the publication was the latest to find that abuse and intimidation of councillors was commonplace, particularly amongst those with protected characteristics, and that this could act as a barrier to people engaging with local democratic institutions.

The Debate, Not Hate report made a series of recommendations, which included Councils and other relevant partners taking greater responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of councillors, and implementing a proactive approach to preventing and handling abuse and intimidation against councillors. The report also recommended that police should act more consistently, and on a risk-based approach, to such offences.

The Standards Committee, and the Independent Person, discussed this issue in some depth, highlighting the need for respect and courtesy in public dialogue and debate. A number of options to improve this issue were suggested by the Monitoring Officer, and members also contributed with ideas of their own. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that discussions had taken place with Humberside Police, and that a Single Point of Contact

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(SPOC) was now in place, and that assurance had been received that police take these matters very seriously. It was recognised that, given the LGA publication had only just been issued, agencies had not had time to respond and develop the guidance recommended and therefore it would be necessary to monitor and review the Council's response in light of any guidance issued.

**Resolved** – That the Monitoring Officer conduct research and draft a further report to the Committee, including options and best practice, to present to the Committee's next meeting.

435 **COMPLAINTS SCHEDULE 2021-22 - UPDATE.**

The Director: Governance & Communities submitted a report updating the Standards Committee on progress made on all outstanding complaints and investigations, and any relevant issues related to the Complaints Schedule.

**Resolved** – That the schedule be noted.

436 **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MUST BE SPECIFIED.**

There were no urgent or additional items for consideration at the meeting.