

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

9 November 2023

PRESENT: -

Cllr M Ali, C O'Sullivan, R Ogg, C Ross, S Swift and D Wells

Mr A Forbes, Dr W Harvie, and Mr R Johnson (Independent Persons)

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

The Director: Outcomes informed the Committee that it would be necessary to elect a Chairman for the meeting.

Moved by Councillor C Ross and seconded by Councillor D Wells -

That Councillor R Ogg be elected as Chairman

Motion Carried

At this point in the meeting Councillor Ogg took the chair, and welcomed everyone.

484 SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)

There were no substitutes.

485 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND PERSONAL OR PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests or personal or personal and prejudicial interests.

486 TO TAKE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 JUNE 2023 AS A CORRECT RECORD AND AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 29 June 2023, having been printed and circulated amongst the members, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the chairman.

487 REVIEW OF PROTOCOL ON MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS

The Director: Outcomes submitted a report which explained that Council, at

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its meeting on 5 October 2023 (minute 2927 refers), approved a review of the Member Officer Protocol, which complied with good practice to regularly review the codes and protocols contained within the council's Constitution. In accordance with the requirements of Article 15 (15.01) of the Constitution, this review was to be carried out through the council's Standards Committee and a recommended revised draft protocol be reported to the December meeting of the Council for consideration and approval.

A benchmarking exercise had been completed, alongside consideration of the associated content of the council's Code of Conduct for Members, Code of Conduct for Officers and the council's Media Relations and Publicity Management Policy. The council's current 'Protocol on Member/Officer Relations' and a draft revised protocol were attached as appendices for the committee's consideration.

Members discussed the draft revised protocol, asking questions about the proposed changes, and the route for members to raise queries with the relevant Director. The Head of Democracy answered accordingly.

Resolved – (a) That the revised draft 'Protocol on Member/Officer Relations' (Part E Code 3 of the council's Constitution) be supported, and it be recommended to Council that it be approved and adopted; and (b) that the Head of Marketing be invited to the next scheduled meeting of the Standards Committee to discuss the council's Media Relations and Publicity Management Policy.

488 RENEWAL OF DISPENSATION - STEEL INDUSTRY

The Director: Outcomes 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 allow members 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 9 November 2023 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.

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489 NLC / HUMBERSIDE POLICE PROTOCOL - VERBAL UPDATE

The Monitoring Officer explained that steps previously agreed by the Standards Committee (minute 459 refers) to enable North Lincolnshire Councillors and Group Office staff to report serious concerns to the police had been implemented.

The Monitoring Officer also provided an update regarding correspondence with Humberside Police's Single Point of Contact, T/Detective Inspector Robinson. T/Detective Inspector Robinson had kindly offered to provide further training to members on the legislation related to online abuse and freedom of speech.

Resolved – (a) That the situation be noted; and (b) that T/Detective Inspector Robinson be invited to the Standards Committee's next meeting to discuss further and to answer questions from members.

490 STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS AND CODE OF CONDUCT - ONLINE TRAINING PACKAGE

The Monitoring Officer provided a demonstration of an online training package that had been developed to distribute to all Town and Parish Councils in North Lincolnshire. This had been developed as a general overview of the standards regime, and was produced to accompany the annual, 'in-person' and online training sessions provided by the Monitoring Officer, and the distribution of the recordings of these sessions. Following a short period of testing, it was intended to send this material to all councils across North Lincolnshire, to enable councillors to access training at a time to suit them.

The Standards Committee discussed the training package, querying whether the names of participants would be recorded, whether a suitable certificate could be provided, and how this might affect the number and nature of future complaints. The Monitoring Officer and the Head of Democracy responded fully.

Resolved – That, following a period of testing and the implementation of the above measures, that the training package be circulated to the clerks of each Town and Parish Council in North Lincolnshire, accompanied by other training materials.

491 COMPLAINTS SCHEDULE - 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.

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Resolved – That the schedule be noted.

492 **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.

The Chairman thanked the Monitoring Officer for his help and support over the years, and wished him well in his new role at a neighbouring local authority. In return, the monitoring Officer also thanked the members of the Standards Committee, past and previous, and the three Independent Persons for their contribution, noting that the standards regime in North Lincolnshire was strong, thanks to the impartiality and collective efforts of all.