

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Model Councillor Code of Conduct

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Standards Committee on the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct and subsequent guidance and consultation responses, and to consider the Committee's next steps.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life published their report 'Local Government Ethical Standards' in January 2019. As part of its conclusions the Committee recommended that "The LGA should create an updated model code of conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government."
- 2.2 The LGA began work on drafting a model Code of Conduct in 2019, consulting on this in mid-2020. The Standards Committee submitted its views as part of this work, and all town and parish councils within North Lincolnshire were encouraged to also consider and respond to the consultation.
- 2.3 The LGA published the Model Code of Conduct in December 2020, and proposed preparing and publishing a number of guidance documents, and also a summary of the consultation responses. These documents would be important in understanding and interpreting the implications of the new Code. This work is still underway by the LGA.
- 2.4 The Monitoring Officer has benchmarked with other councils and specialists through existing networks in order to gain the views of others. As the associated guidance remains outstanding, the great majority appear not yet to have recommended changes to their local arrangements.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 To note that the accompanying guidance related to the published LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct remains outstanding, and to consider the Committee's next steps.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Many of the provisions within the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct are aligned with the Council's current Code of Conduct. The further guidance that will be published is likely to provide clarity and enable comparison and informal benchmarking between Monitoring Officers.
- 4.2 The situation remains that the further guidance will enable more informed consideration before the Committee considers whether to recommend adoption of the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct. A further report could be submitted to a future meeting of the Standards Committee following publication.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

- 5.1 There are no significant financial implications or resource implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 Any recommendation to adopt the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct would require the approval of full Council. It would be a matter for each town and parish council to determine whether it adopted the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

- 6.1 Ensuring robust governance arrangements and the highest standards of ethical behaviour by elected members are key considerations. These issues are, rightly, expected by local residents. Moreover, the Council Plan recognises the importance of 'maintaining high standards' and being 'open, trustworthy and honest' in the discharge of business.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 8.1 The LGA consulted widely on the draft Model Councillor Code of Conduct, and revised their document in response to responses, including from the Standards Committee.
- 8.2 Whilst any revised LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct would apply to elected councillors sitting on the Standards Committee, it is considered that this does not amount to a conflict of interest.

9. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 That the Committee continue to note the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct and the LGA's intention to publish further guidance.
- 9.2 That a further report be submitted to the Standards Committee following publication of the guidance and consultation responses.

DIRECTOR: GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIPS

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Committee on Standards in Public Life – Local Government Ethical Standards 2019
Local Government Association – Councillor Code of Conduct