

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

20 January 2021

PRESENT: - Councillor Poole (in the Chair).

Councillors, Bainbridge, England, L Foster, O’Sullivan, and Wells.

Co-opted member - Ms S Wroe

Mr T Forbes and Mr R Johnson – Independent Persons

The committee met via MS Teams

328 **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, PERSONAL OR PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS** – There were no declarations made at the meeting.

329 **MINUTES - Resolved** – That the minutes of minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 11 November 2020, the Standards Committee – Hearings Panel held on 11 November 2020, and the minutes of the Standards Committee – Assessment Panel held on 11 November 2020 and 15 December 2020, having been printed and circulated amongst the members, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the chairman.

330 **MODEL COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT** - The Director: Governance and Partnerships submitted a report informing the Standards Committee of the agreement by the Local Government Association (LGA) of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct

The Monitoring Officer explained that 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.”

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.

The LGA had now published their finalised Model Councillor Code of Conduct, and the Monitoring Officer described in detail where the Model differed from, or was similar to, the existing North Lincolnshire Code. The Monitoring Officer explained that it was anticipated that the LGA intended to prepare and publish a number of guidance documents, and also a summary of the consultation responses. These documents will be important in understanding and interpreting the implications of the new Code.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
20 January 2021

The Chairman led a discussion on the Model Councillor Code, expressing confidence in the existing version in use within North Lincolnshire, but being open to the potential for improving it further. Members expressed their opinions and asked questions of the Monitoring Officer, including on the introduction of a duty to report complaints, the proposed financial requirements to declare interests, and concerns around changing the wording of the types of interest.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that any changes to the Code would need to be agreed by Council.

Resolved – That further work be undertaken to consider the implications of adopting the new Model Code, or using some of its provisions to improve the existing Code; (b) that the Monitoring Officer seek the views of his peers and other professionals working in this field, and (c) that a further report be submitted to the March meeting of the Standards Committee.

- 331 **STANDARDS TRAINING – UPDATE** – The Monitoring Officer confirmed that an online training session for town and parish councillors and clerks would be delivered on 4 March 2021. This session would be recorded and made accessible for all councillors and clerks at any time. The training would be prioritised for new councillors and staff, or those with particular questions or concerns.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

- 332 **COMPLAINTS SCHEDULE** - The Director: Governance and Partnerships submitted a report updating the committee on progress made with complaints received.

The Monitoring Officer updated members on the complaints schedule, confirming that a Hearings Panel and an Assessment Panel were likely to be convened in the coming weeks.

Resolved - That the report be noted.