

## **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 supporting guidance, 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 Councillor 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 first published its Model Councillor Code of Conduct in December 2020, and since then three further versions have been published. The stated aim of the LGA was to provide a Code that "is a template for local authorities to adopt in whole and/or with amendments to take into account local circumstances."
- 2.4 The associated guidance was published by the LGA on 8 July 2021, and is attached at Appendix 1. This guidance is intended to aid understanding and consistency of approach towards the Code. The LGA has committed to issuing further guidance in respect of other related standards issues covering the following aspects: initial assessment of

complaints; alternative complaint resolution; investigation good practice; and holding a hearing.

2.5 Initial consideration shows that the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct and associated guidance are largely aligned with current arrangements in North Lincolnshire and wholesale changes to the Council's Code of Conduct are not considered necessary. That said, there are some minor amendments and improvements that perhaps could be made to local arrangements. For example, the guidance on social media usage is helpful and timely, given the significant and increasing proportion of complaints that include reference to social media posts. It is proposed that a review be undertaken in light of the LGA guidance and emerging sector practice with a view to a report being submitted to the next Committee for consideration.

2.6 Any amendments to the Council's Code of Conduct following consideration by the Committee would require the approval of full Council.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 To note the publication of the supporting guidance related to the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

3.2 To approve the Monitoring Officer carrying out a of review local arrangements in light of the supporting guidance, and to bring a further report, with options, to the next scheduled meeting of the Standards Committee.

### **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.

4.2 The supporting guidance is also largely aligned with local arrangements, but there may be opportunities for improvements to local arrangements, and the guidance that is given to local councillors.

4.3 The Monitoring Officer will continue to conduct informal benchmarking with other local authorities.

### **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 or amend the current 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 notes the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct and the LGA’s supporting guidance.

9.2 That a further report be submitted to the Committee following review of local arrangements in light of publication of the supporting guidance.

**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

LGA Model Code of Conduct 2020

LGA Supporting Guidance 2021