



**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**10:00 – 10:30**

**5 July 2022**

Present: Councillors Driver (chair following appointment), Fulton-McAlister (M) (substitute for Thomas (Va)), Grahame, Huntley, Lubbock, Stutely (substitute for Davis) and Young and Linda Barber (independent person).

Apologies: Councillors Davis and Thomas (Va) and Mr P Franzen (co-opted member)

**1. Appointment of chair**

**RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Driver as chair for the ensuing civic year.

**2. Appointment of vice-chair**

**RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Davis as vice-chair for the ensuing civic year.

**3. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 17 November 2020 and 6 July 2021.

**5. Standards Committee Update Report, including Code of Conduct and Committee for Standards in Public Life response**

The monitoring officer presented the report. She highlighted the fact that only one formal complaint had been received in previous year. The complaint procedure had been updated and adopted at council on 21 July 2021 and incorporated in the council's constitution.

With regard to the code of conduct, the monitoring officer highlighted that since the last update to committee on the Local Government Association (LGA) model Code of Conduct, the Government's response to the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report had been released. However, as there were no plans for regulations to be changed, the LGA was not proposing to change its model Code of Conduct. A member commented that it seemed that the council's code of conduct was clearer

than the LGA code of conduct on the requirement to declare receipt of gifts and hospitality. Another member commented that Norfolk County Council had adopted the LGA model Code of Conduct, so it would seem sensible to have consistency with the county council. The monitoring officer said that adopting the LGA model Code of Conduct would mean that the constitution would need to be revised as some elements of the model code around declaration of interests at meetings were already included within the council's committee procedure rules. The current constitution requirements on gifts and hospitality would be retained as guidance to advise councillors.

The monitoring officer then commented on the Government's response to the CSPL report. The Government had said that there should be locally specific rules rather than a national code of conduct. The CSPL report and Government had agreed on the publication of a specific register of gifts and hospitality. She clarified that whilst the constitution stated that the receipt of gifts and hospitality may be produced to members of the public on request, the current practice was for these to be published against each individual member's record on the council's website. Therefore, she was seeking views from the committee whether they felt that there should be an annual register also published on the council's website. A member commented that for transparency it seemed sensible to publish an annual register.

Members discussed the indemnity for the independent person. They felt that this would help to protect the independent person when giving advice on standards complaints. A member commented that this would also help to 'level the playing field' for individuals from different backgrounds to become an Independent Person. The independent person commented that in her experience no subject member had contacted her about a complaint made against them.

The independent person queried whether there was a restriction on the length of time that independent person could be appointed for. The monitoring officer confirmed that there was no restriction on this. The committee had debated in the past whether a second independent person should be appointed, and this was something that could be considered.

Members discussed updating the Whistleblowing Policy to include the contact details of the external auditor. In their view it would be helpful to include these in the constitution for members of the public.

**RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Recommend to council that the council adopts the LGA model Code of Conduct; and
- 2) Ask the Monitoring Officer to:
  - a) Publish an annual register of Gifts and Hospitality received by members on the council's website
  - b) Offer the council's independent person an indemnity for the views they provide in respect of standards complaints; and
  - c) Update the Whistleblowing policy to include the contact details of the external auditor

CHAIR