

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 12 October 2023 at 2.00 pm.

#### PRESENT

J Jackson (Chair) (in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

L Dunn  
L Grimshaw  
G Stewart  
T Cessford

B Flux  
J Reid  
R Wilczek

#### PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

A Varley

#### OFFICERS

L M Bennett  
N Masson

Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Head of Legal Services and Deputy  
Monitoring Officer  
Director of Law and Governance/Monitoring  
Officer

S Gerrard

#### 8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor S. Lee, D. Towns, Parish Councillor C. Barrett and Independent Persons K. Milner, S. Openshaw and A. Beswick.

#### 9 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 13 July 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### 10 INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Members received a report advising them on the need to undertake a fresh recruitment process in respect of the Independent Chairman of the Standards Committee and to agree the detail of that process.

Neil Masson reported that the recruitment process had commenced and the

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deadline for applications had now passed. The response to the advert had been disappointing, however, it was planned to move ahead to the interview stage.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) The position relating to the need to reappoint to the position of Independent Chairman of the Standards Committee be noted.
- (2) An interview panel be established with the following membership to make a recommendation to council regarding the appointment to such position.

Councillors L. Dunn, J. Reid, G. Stewart

- (3) Councillor B. Flux be appointed as substitute in the event of a conflict of interest or other reason a member of the appointment panel is precluded or unable to attend the interviews,

## 11 **INDEPENDENT DESKTOP REVIEW - UPDATE**

Members received a report updating them on work to address the recommendations of the Independent Desktop Review.

Stephen Gerrard reported that the role and manner of operation of the standards process had been reviewed as a desktop exercise. The aim had been to produce a shorter and simplified document to provide clear parameters as what would or would not be investigated. The hearing procedure had also been revised to clarify what the process would be at a hearing.

Members welcomed the revised arrangements.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) The revised Arrangements for dealing with Member Complaints and Hearing Procedure be approved.
- (2) Revision of the process for hearings and investigations from time to time, as necessary, in accordance with best practice, be delegated to the Monitoring Officer following consultation with the Chair.

12 **CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS - PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received a report on the progress with complaints received by the authority under the new arrangements adopted by the authority for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 11 January 2024 at 2.00 pm.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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