



# Northumberland County Council

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**12<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

### **Independent Desktop Review - Update Report of the Director of Corporate Law and Governance**

#### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To update members on work to address the recommendations of the Independent Desktop Review.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. To approve the attached revised Arrangements for dealing with Member Complaints and Hearing Procedure.
- 2.2. To Delegate to the Monitoring Officer to revise the process for hearings and investigations from time to time, as necessary, in accordance with best practice following consultation with the Chair.

#### **3. Link to Corporate Plan**

- 3.1. **Achieving Value For Money** – The improvement in processes and procedures will ensure more efficient use of resources. The report is about ensuring good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.

#### **4. Key issues and Background**

- 4.1. Following the review over the summer the Monitoring officer has reviewed the Council's procedure for dealing with Standards Complaints ('the Arrangements') and the Hearings Procedure. The intention has been to clarify and simplify the guidance.

- 4.2. These documents are attached at Appendix 2 and 3 respectively. Members are asked to approve the Arrangements and Hearings Procedure.. The Hearings Procedure has been revised to cater for a pre-hearing process.
- 4.3. In accordance with best practice the work of the Standards Committee will be reported to the council on a regular basis.

## 5. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	The local determination of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct is a statutory requirement
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.
<b>Legal</b>	The Localism Act 2011 states that local authorities must put in place arrangements for the Council to consider code of conduct complaints.
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b>	The Code of Conduct supports the Council's policies on equalities in service delivery
(Impact Assessment attached)	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	The procedures in relation to the local assessment of member conduct complaints are designed to support fair and efficient handling of those complaints by the Council with the aim of avoiding challenge or dissatisfaction with that process.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	The locally based system of assessment, investigation and determination of complaints supports compliance with the Code of Conduct which in turn supports the Council's general aims in relation to crime and disorder.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The Code of Conduct is consistent with and reinforces the Council's approach to customer relations.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	N/A
<b>Wards</b>	All

## **6. Appendices**

- 1 Desktop Review – Action Plan
- 2 Arrangements For dealing with Standards Allegations
- 3 Hearing Procedure

### **Background papers**

Weightmans report - Desktop Review of the way in which the Council dealt with a number of code of conduct complaints

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s13980/03.1%20Weightmans%20R%20eport%20-%20Lessons%20learnt%20report%20Appendix%201.pdf>

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