

# **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**2023- 2024**

**Meetings on: 13 July 2023, 12 October 2023**

## **1. THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 – THE STANDARDS REGIME**

The new standards regime came into effect on 1 July 2012. The Council, at its meeting on 4 July 2012, agreed the membership of eight Councillors and three Town and Parish Council non-voting co-optees. The Standards Committee is chaired by an independent Chair. There are also now three Independent Persons who are not members of the Committee but do attend its meetings and hearings.

The Standards Committee has met on two occasions since May 2023.

There is currently a vacancy for a Town/Parish Councillor following the sad death of Councillor Alan Varley in November 2023.

## **2. INDEPENDENT DESKTOP REVIEW UPDATE**

The Independent Desktop Review of the Standards process had been requested by the LGA Advisory Challenge Board. The recommendations of that review which reviewed the role and manner of the operation of the standards process were presented to Members along with a plan to produce a shorter and simplified document to provide clear parameters as to what would or would not be investigated. The hearing procedure had also been revised to clarify the process that would take place at a hearing.

Members welcomed the revised arrangements and approved the Member Complaints and Hearing Procedure. It was also agreed that revision of the process for investigations and hearings, be delegated to the Monitoring Officer following consultation with the Chair.

## **3. INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Members were informed that the Independent Chair of the Standards Committee was nearing the end of his term of office and of the need to undertake a recruitment process for his replacement. An interview panel was established, and an interview took place on 22 November 2023, however, it was decided that an appointment could not be made.

The current Chair has agreed to remain in post for a further year or until a successor is appointed following a new recruitment process.

#### 4. DISPENSATIONS

Members were informed that a number of concerns had been raised relating to the requirement to publish, on the Council's website, Members addresses as part of the Declaration of Interests Register.

It was reported that it was not possible to give a blanket dispensation to Members to remove their addresses from the public Declaration of Interests Register. However, dispensation could be requested from the Director of Law and Corporate Governance on an individual basis.

#### 5. CASELOAD

The Monitoring Officer, in conjunction with the Independent Person(s) has dealt with the following complaints since 17 May 2023.

	<b>Open/Ongoing</b>	<b>Closed/No Action Required</b>
<b>County</b>	0	18
<b>Parish</b>	0	15

33 complaints have been resolved in the past municipal year and there are currently no outstanding cases. The rate of complaints received has also slowed with only three complaints received so far in this calendar year.

**Mr. J. Jackson**  
**Independent Chair**