

Draft Annual report for 2020/2021

Foreword from the Chair of the Joint Standards Committee

It has been a privilege to both chair and be a member of this statutory committee for the last municipal year. Unlike some local authorities, York, decided some time ago to not impose proportionality to this committee, thereby ensuring an even political balance. That decision has proved very beneficial as we have attempted to handle our workload as collaboratively as possible. The complaints process is in need of a review and overhaul, and we have committed to look at this as a matter of urgency. We will also be looking at the LGAs new model code of conduct and recommending it's adoption at full council.

The Coronavirus pandemic affected the first scheduled meeting of the municipal year. However, since July 2020 remote meetings have been taking place throughout the rest of 2020 and into 2021.

Membership of the Committee

The Committee would like to thank all of its Members for supporting and attending the meetings during this year. The Committee appointed Councillor Martin Rowley as the Chair and Parish Councillor Stuart Rawlings as the Vice Chair.

City of York Council:

- Councillor Martin Rowley **BEM**
- Councillor Claire Douglas
- Councillor Rosie Baker
- Councillor David Carr
- Councillor Tony Fisher

Parish Councils

- Councillor Stuart Rawlings
- Councillor Christopher Chambers
- Councillor Sian Wiseman

Earswick Parish Council tendered their resignation as Members of the Joint Standards Committee during this municipal year and the Committee would like to thank Parish Councillor Sian Wiseman and Earswick Parish Council for their support over the last few years.

At the request of the Monitoring Officer, the Yorkshire Local Councils Association conducted a ballot across Parish and Town Councils in the City of York area and the Joint Standards Committee would like to welcome Parish Councillor Mark Waudby of Rawcliffe Parish Council to the Joint Standards Committee from March 2021.

Independent Persons

- Angharad Davies
- David Laverick

Complaints

During the municipal year 2020-2021, the Council received 26 complaints.

Of these, 12 complaints related to 16 City of York Councillors and 14 complaints related to 15 Parish Councillors.

2 complaints were upheld by the investigating officer and the findings accepted by the Monitoring Officer, a further 2 complaints were upheld by the investigating officer and are due to be referred to a Joint Standards Committee Hearing Panel in due course;

5 complaints were not upheld by the investigating officer and the findings accepted by the monitoring officer; and

9 complaints did not meet the published criteria for investigation.

5 matters are being investigated and are yet to be concluded, in addition, there are a further 4 matters that are currently being investigated by an external investigating officer which relates to a previous municipal year.

All of the complaints received have been reported to meetings of the Joint Standards Committee throughout the year.

Other work

Model Code of Conduct for Members

At the beginning of this municipal year, the Local Government Association conducted a consultation exercise in relation to a Model Code of Conduct for Members which they had produced. The Monitoring Officer, on behalf of the Joint Standards Committee participated in this exercise and work is ongoing to look to implement the Model Code and consider any guidance which is published in the coming months. Key areas raised by the Committee included social media, bullying and harassment, including ensuring that all protected characteristics were included within the definition found in the Model Code and also gifts and hospitality.

In December 2020 the LGA approved a final Model Code of Conduct, which was circulated to the Joint Standards Committee in January 2021. Members decided that the Model Code should remain as a standard item at Joint Standards Committee

meetings in order that any guidance issued in the future by the LGA can be considered and that the Council's Code of Conduct meets any requirements set out within the Model Code.

Dispensation of the 6 Month Rule during Lockdown

The Committee noted a dispensation given by the Monitoring Officer of the 6 month rule for City of York Councillors in relation to attendance at meetings in light of the Coronavirus Pandemic and the provision of remote meetings.

The Committee also noted a further dispensation which allowed Members to take part in a specially convened Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee Meeting in September 2020. The dispensation allowed the Meeting Members who also were Planning and Area Planning Committee Members to take part in the Meeting without future risk of pre-determination.

Member Development

The Joint Standards Committee considered a report advising on Planning and Pre-Determination, which was noted, and it was agreed that this advice would form part of a larger review around Member Development, which is ongoing. The Joint Standards Committee are seeking the views of Group Leaders before further consideration of Member Development takes place in the next municipal year.

Parish Council Membership

As briefly mentioned, as a result of Earswick Parish Council's resignation, a ballot took place to fill the vacancy on the Joint Standards Committee. Parish Councillor Mark Waudby of Rawcliffe Parish Council has now filled the vacancy.

Work is ongoing around supporting the work of Parish Councils, which will include consideration of whether the work around Member Development can include Parish Councils. A report around the Parish Charter will be presented to the Joint Standards Committee early in the next municipal year, in order to improve relations and strengthen the working relationship between the Council and Parish Council's across the City.

Review of the Constitution

A review of the Council's Constitution is currently taking place and as part of this review, the Joint Standards Committee have considered a draft International Travel Protocol. Work is ongoing around finalising this draft.