

30 June 2022

Annual report for 2021/2022

Foreword from the Chair of the Joint Standards Committee

This has been a busy year for the Joint Standards Committee as we have sought to make improvements to the Council's ethical governance framework which resulted in the adoption of the LGA Model Code of Conduct in October 2021. We have also overseen a comprehensive revision of the associated procedures to support to Model Code and we are pleased to have worked alongside colleagues on the Audit & Governance Committee so as to ensure these procedures are published in the revised constitution.

However, managing the complaints received about our City and Parish and Town Councillors has remained a large part of our work during this year. An integral part of this has been the value contribution of our Independent Persons and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their commitment and support during this year and as both have expressed a wish to retire from the Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Angharad and David and wish them every best wish for the future.

Cllr M Rowley BEM
Chair of Joint Standards Committee

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 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 Mark Waudby

Independent Persons

- Angharad Davies
- David Laverick

Complaints

The Council received 29 complaints during the municipal year 2021-2022, and of the 21 concluded in that time:

- 1 complaint was upheld
- 1 complaint was not upheld
- 19 complaints did not progress to an investigation

The remainder are still being investigated or assessed and await determination in accordance with the published procedures.

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 and review of Supporting Procedures

A substantial amount of work has been carried out to adopt the LGA Model Code of Conduct during this municipal year. This work was undertaken with advice and support from Paul Hoey and Natalie Ainscough from Hoey Ainscough Associates, who attended several Joint Standard Committee Meetings throughout the municipal year.

The Model Code, which was adopted by Full Council in October 2021, contributes to the delivery of the Action Plan, arising from the Public Interest Report which is currently being monitored by Audit and Governance Committee. The Joint Standards Committee are also grateful to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee for their assistance and feedback in discussions around the adoption of the Model Code of Conduct.

Supporting the adoption of the Model Code, Hoey Ainsough were also commissioned by the Joint Standards Committee to deliver a series of training events to all City of York Councillors and key staff on the interpretation and application of the new Code.

Following the adoption of the Model Code of Conduct it has been essential for the Committee to review the supporting procedures and this was undertaken with the ongoing support of Hoey Ainscough Associates. The revised procedures provide additional assistance and clarity in key areas of the process, including assessment of complaints, a FAQ document for complainants or subject Councillors and a flowchart of the key stages in the process.

Consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Joint Standards Committee has been introduced at key stages in the complaints process, including assessment stage and also when deciding whether a matter should progress to a Hearing.

Recruitment of Independent Persons

A recruitment exercise took place during the middle of 2021. Unfortunately, there were no applicants, and the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Governance are now working on a further recruitment exercise following the resignation of our two Independent Persons. It is hoped that a third independent person could hopefully be appointed which will add resilience especially in view of the volume of complaints currently being experienced.

York's Parish Charter

The Joint Standards Committee has been kept informed on the progression of the review of the charter between City of York Council and the 31 Parish and Town Council's across the City, as represented

by the York Branch of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations. The Committee was assisted in these discussions by the Assistant Director of Communities and Culture.

Dispensations granted to City of York Councillors

The Committee noted a dispensation given by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Joint Standards Committee to Councillors relating to an agenda item at Full Council in July 2021 and also a further dispensation given at the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee Meeting which took place in February 2022. The meeting was convened as an Executive decision was called in for further scrutiny.

Review of the Constitution

The Joint Standards Committee has actively contributed to the Review of the Council's Constitution and as aforementioned the Model Code of Conduct and the supporting procedures will form an integral part of the revised constitution, which should be in place in time for the municipal year 2022-2023.

The Joint Standards Committee has also taken the opportunity to review its terms of reference to ensure they remain fit for purpose and satisfactorily address the remit of the Committee's work and in doing so has made a recommendation that the Parish Council Members of the Committee should have the support of substitute Parish Councillors to add resilience.

The Joint Standards Committee will continue to develop and strengthen its role in embedding a positive culture of ethical governance and hopes to work collaboratively with the Audit & Governance Committee as regards issues such as member development and induction programmes.