



# MINUTES

## Standards Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Thursday, 21 March 2024
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall, St Annes.
<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillor Susan Fazackerley MBE (Chairman) Councillor Peter Collins (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Ellie Gaunt, Matthew Lee, Viv Willder.
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Tracy Manning, Katharine McDonnell

### 1. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. No interests were declared on this occasion.

### 2. Substitute Members

There were no substitutions on this occasion.

### Decision Items

### 3. Standards Complaints Handling Procedure

The Chairman introduced the revised Standards Complaints Handling Procedure. She advised the former Audit and Standards Committee had considered and adopted a complaint handling procedure, which had broadly worked well but both Fylde and Blackpool Monitoring Officers had agreed some refinements to it would provide clarity and improve the procedure.

Councillor Fazackerley continued, advising that resultant revision was before the committee for review and adoption. She stated that the draft had been prepared in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee, the three Independent Persons, and the Monitoring Officers and their respective Deputies from both Fylde and Blackpool Councils.

Tracy Manning, Monitoring Officer, explained that the Committee on Standards in Public Life, following a review of ethical standards in local government in 2019, had made a series of recommendations. One of the recommendations was that a local authority should have straightforward and accessible guidance available on its website on how to make a complaint under the Code of Conduct and explain the process for complaints handling.

She advised that the complaints handling procedure helps not only those wishing to complain, but also those subject to a complaint, to understand the process.

Through practical experience of using the procedure over the course of the last three years both Blackpool and Fylde Council's Monitoring Officers had identified the need for some minor modifications. A key change was that the previous procedure had set no timeframe for a subject member to prepare any submissions for consideration

Minutes – Standards Committee – 21 March 2024

by the committee when a standards hearing took place. The revised procedure allowed for 10 working days for the subject member to provide any paperwork prior to the publication of the agenda.

In response to questions Tracy advised there were safeguards built into the procedure to protect against repeat complainers, and anonymous complaints were generally rejected unless anonymity was required to protect the complainant, or the allegation was of a sufficiently serious nature to warrant it being accepted.

There were further questions relating to the background and expertise of the Independent Persons, whether all complaints were reported to committee, and forms of resolution.

In response Tracy provided details of the Independent Persons experience which provided the council with a wealth of expertise and support for both councillors and the Monitoring Officer. She advised that only the broad categories of complaints received were provided to committee on a periodic basis. Only complaints that were investigated were brought to the attention of members in further detail. Wherever possible complaints were resolved by informal resolution.

With no further questions or debate it was RESOLVED to adopt the revised Standards Complaints Handling Procedure.

#### Information Items

The following information items were received and noted by the committee.

#### 4. Issues Raised with the Monitoring Officer

Periodic reports to the Standards Committee are brought to ensure that members of the Standards Committee have an overview of the volume and nature of complaints arising.

Tracy Manning, Monitoring Officer, advised that two further complaints had been received since the report was published but were yet to be reviewed. She further advised that the further complaints referred to parish councils.

---

#### **Fylde Council copyright 2024**

You may re-use this document/publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context.

The material must be acknowledged as Fylde Council copyright and you must give the title of the source document/publication.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This document/publication was also available on our website at [www.fylde.gov.uk](http://www.fylde.gov.uk)  
any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to the Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes FY8 1LW, or to [listening@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:listening@fylde.gov.uk).