

**STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE  
12th June, 2025**

Present:- Councillor Clarke (in the Chair); Councillors T. Collingham, Hall, Harper, Keenan, Monk along with Mrs. M. Carroll (Parish Council Representative) and also Mrs. A. Bingham and Mrs. K. Penney (Independent Members).

Also in attendance were Mr. P. Beavers and Mr. D. Roper-Newman (Independent Persons).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beck and Lelliott.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved:-** That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for (Minute Nos. 8 and 9 (Whistleblowing and Complaints) on the grounds that the appendices to those reports involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH MARCH, 2025**

**Resolved:-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 were approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

**4. REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer seeking a review by the Committee of the Code of Conduct.

The Model Code of Conduct as provided by the LGA remained as it was drafted in 2020. The Monitoring Officer had, therefore, reviewed the Code of Conduct and was happy with its current content. However, the Committee may suggest any amendments they feel would be beneficial.

More recently, however, the Government sought views on introducing measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England, partly to ensure consistency of approach among Councils in addressing breaches of their Member Code of Conduct. One of the issues consulted upon was the possible introduction of a mandatory minimum Code of Conduct for local authorities in England, as opposed to the current optional model code.

Whilst consultation had taken place there was no imminent decision.

The Committee's views were now sought on the current version as adopted by the Council in May 2021.

The Committee expressed frustration as to how the Code of Conduct had no real influence over Town and Parish Councillors and the difficult judgements over compliance in the absence of any sanctions. There was no legal requirement for Town and Parish Councils to adopt the model Code and were advised that if in doubt contact should be made with the Monitoring Officer.

Acknowledging the challenges Elected Members did have a right to privacy, but this was balanced against the public's right to know and their own responsibilities as public figures. While they were entitled to personal space and confidentiality like any individual, certain aspects of their private lives may be relevant to their public role and subject to scrutiny.

The importance of raising standards was emphasised and the National Association of Local Councils had introduced the Civility and Respect Pledge to start a culture change in the Town and Parish Council sector to eradicate bullying, harassment and intimidation. Town and Parish Councils were encouraged to sign up enabling them to demonstrate their commitment to addressing poor behaviour and fostering positive changes that supported civil and respectful conduct. Whilst some in Rotherham had signed up to the Pledge there were many who had not.

The Committee wished to see standards of behaviour improve across Town and Parish Councils and sought assurance that relevant training was offered and undertaken and serious consideration was given to the adoption of the Civility and Respect Pledge. It was suggested that a friendly reminder via Clerks was circulated.

**Resolved:-** (1) That following a review of the Code of Conduct no amendments were suggested.

(2) That the Monitoring Officer contact all the Parish Clerks to highlight the importance of signing up the National Association of Local Council's Civility and Respect Pledge to eradicate bullying, harassment and intimidation in the Town and Parish Council sector.

## 5. CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

Consideration was given to a report by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which set out the objectives of and the resources available to Members through the LGA's Civility in Public Life campaign.

## **STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE - 12/06/25**

The LGA's Civility in Public Life campaign started at the time of the Committee on Standards in Public Life report into Ethical Standards in Local Government. One of the main focuses initially for the campaign was to provide a Model Code of Conduct as a direct response to one of the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life report.

Due to the type and nature of the complaints received by the Council it was felt timely and appropriate to provide a reminder to members of this Committee, as to the ambit and content of the Civility in Public Life campaign and the resources available therein. It was, therefore, proposed that a summary of the resources available through the Civility in Public Life campaign be provided to all locally elected Members to assist in their role as councillor, in particular around standards and conduct.

In light of the Council and the Standards and Ethics Committee having a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct, it was suggested the Monitoring Officer circulate the materials referred to within this report as this could only contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

The Committee welcomed any opportunity to uphold and promote the high standards of conduct and as such suggested details also be included in the Members' Newsletter as well as details circulated to all Town and Parish Clerks. If possible links on the website should be provided in the Standards and Ethics area, along with any induction materials or correspondence provided where new local councillors are elected.

**Resolved:-** (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the Monitoring Officer circulate to Borough members a summary of the resources available as set out in this report via the Members newsletter and provide the same information to Town and Parish Councils via Clerks.

### **6. RESPECT AND CIVILITY PLEDGE**

Consideration was given to a verbal update by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which outlined the project by the National Association of Local Councils. The Civility and Respect Pledge was for Town and Parish Councils to sign up to and help tackle poor behaviour and promote culture change.

Town and Parish Councils were encouraged to sign up and once completed, would receive support and access to various resources. By signing the Pledge, Town and Parish Councils agreed they would treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles.

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To date only thirteen Town and Parish Councils in Rotherham had signed up to the Pledge (46%). Whilst training was voluntary it would be good practice if information was again circulated to Town and Parish Councils encouraging them to sign up and the benefits of doing so outlined.

**Resolved:-** (1) That the update be received and the contents noted.

(2) That details and a link be again circulated to Town and Parish Council Clerks.

### **7. MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Further to Minute No. 29 of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 the Deputy Monitoring Officer provided an update on mechanism for selecting nominees for the Town and Parish Councils through the Yorkshire Local Councils Association. This process was ongoing so an update report would be provided to the next meeting.

In respect of the two vacant Independent Members of the Committee these positions would be advertised in due course.

**Resolved:-** That the update on the membership be received and noted.

### **8. A REVIEW OF CONCERNS RAISED PURSUANT TO THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Consideration was given to the report and appendix presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, which provided an overview of the Whistleblowing cases which have been received over the past year.

Particular reference was made to the appendix to the report which set out clearly the description of the concerns received and action taken.

**Resolved:-** That the Whistleblowing concerns raised over the previous year and the actions taken to address these matters be noted.

### **9. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS**

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, detailing the progress with the handling of complaints relating to breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and Town and Parish Councillors. The report listed the current cases of complaint and the action being taken in respect of each one.

Reference was made to each related case and recommended outcomes/actions identified were highlighted and any questions answered.

**Resolved:-** That the report be received and the contents noted.

**10. URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Committee's consideration.