

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2024
<b>Report Subject</b>	Review of the Flintshire Standard
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer Governance

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has adopted a Local Resolution Process (LRP) that also includes a statement of the standards of behaviour to which the Council aspires. This is called the Flintshire Standard. The document was created in 2013 and was reviewed in 2019. This review is part of the rolling review of the constitution.

The Flintshire Standard expands on the provision of the councillors' code of conduct which require people to be treated with respect by setting out dos and don'ts. The standard appears to cover all required situations and seemingly works well.

There are a number of external factors which may give rise to suggested amendments. If the committee has no suggested amendments of its own, then it may wish to wait to see whether others have any suggested amendments.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To consider whether the Committee wishes to suggest amendments to the Flintshire Standard whilst noting that others may suggest amendments.
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### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>BACKGROUND TO THE FLINTSHIRE STANDARD</b>
1.01	In June 2013 the Council adopted a local resolution process, called the Flintshire Standard. The Flintshire Standard sets out how members should behave towards each other and officers. It incorporates a local

	resolution process (LRP) as an alternative to either informal action by the Monitoring Officer or referring complaints about behaviour to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).
1.02	The provisions of the Code of Conduct, which, whilst possessing the virtue of brevity, do not give practical examples of what is required as part of the obligation to treat others with respect. The Flintshire Standard therefore expands upon the obligations that relate to behaviour towards others with a list of “do’s and don’ts” across a range of situations.
1.03	The Standard also includes a local resolution process (LRP. The LRP is an alternative to the sometimes lengthy, adversarial process of a complaint to the PSOW. It sets out an escalating process of mediation to be followed in an attempt to help repair relationships within the council (member to member or member to officer).
1.04	If the mediatory process breaks down or fails to achieve an outcome, then the complainant is still at liberty to report their complaint to the PSOW. So the process only works to the extent that both parties want to make it work.
<b>Reviewing the Standard</b>	
1.05	The Standard itself is primarily intended to cover behaviour in public (whether in meetings, on social media etc) but encompasses workplace behaviour in private and email exchanges as well. The list appears to cover the breadth of behaviours that might be seen as wrong or inappropriate albeit that some specific acts are not expressly prohibited (e.g. it does not expressly prohibit making amorous or sexual advances though it does prohibit indecent language).
1.06	Since it was last reviewed in 2019 the process has been used five times. Three occasions were member to member complaints and two related to complaints by officers. Four of the five complaints related to public statements to which others had taken offence. The fifth occasion related to comments made by one member about another during internal group discussions within the council. All were resolved satisfactorily.
1.07	The training on respectful communication may highlight examples of where there has been a breakdown in the relationship between members. That training will be followed by a joint member/officer session on how the interface between the political and professional spheres should work. That discussion may highlight examples of where the relationship between members and officers has broken down. These might then give rise to suggestions for how the Standard should be altered.
1.08	The PSOW has recently requested all councils to submit a copy of their LRP for consideration and comparison. The outcome of that comparison won’t be known until later in June (at the earliest). It is possible therefore that the PSOW might suggest changes to be made to the LRP.
1.09	If the committee has no suggested amendments of its own, then it may wish to wait to see whether others have any suggested amendments.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	The Flintshire Standard is intentionally quick and simple to operate in its early stages, so that any disputes are quickly resolved. The process is therefore not greatly demanding of time or other resources.
<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	Any revisions to the document will need to be considered by the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee prior to submission to Full Council for approval.
<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	The local resolution process contained within the Flintshire Standard is intended for use on low level complaints concerning the relationship between councillors or councillors and officers. It can be invoked quickly and easily in order to catch issues before significant harm occurs to that relationship and whilst people are more willing to compromise. It is, however, extra statutory and so does not have recourse to the legislative sanctions available following a complaint to the Ombudsman. Its use must always therefore be considered carefully to ensure its suitability in light of the nature of the complaint and the surrounding circumstances.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Flintshire Standard

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>There are no accessible background documents.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702344  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk">gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	None