

Summary Sheet

Standards and Ethics Committee Report

Standards and Ethics Committee - 13th June 2019

Title

Annual Report

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

N/A

Report Author(s)

Stuart Fletcher, Service Manager (Commercial and Property), Legal Services,

Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

A report setting the work undertaken by the Standards Committee in the municipal year 2018/2019.

Recommendations

That the Committee notes the work undertaken by the Standards and Ethics Committee in the municipal year 2018/2019.

List of Appendices Included

N/A

Background Papers

Previous Agendas and Minutes of Standards Committee meetings

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Title

Annual Report

1. Recommendations

That the Committee notes the work undertaken in the municipal year 2018/2019.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report summarises the work undertaken by the Standards Committee during the Municipal Year 2018/2019.
- 2.2 In May 2018 the Committee received a report about a review of the Standards and Ethics Committee Order of Proceedings to be used at Sub-Committee Hearings. The Committee also received a standards bulletin, a report about the membership of the standards and ethics Committee and the appointment of Independent Persons. The Committee also received a report about the Committee work plan for the Municipal year.
- 2.3 Also in May 2018 the Committee received a report about the consultation exercise being undertaken by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in respect of their review into Ethical Standards in Local Government. Subsequently a working group met to discuss the Committee's response to the consultation, which was submitted by the Monitoring Officer in May 2018. This response set out concerns which the standards committee had expressed for some time.
- 2.3 In June 2018 the Committee received reports about the Committee's training plan, a report about local codes and protocols, the previous year's Annual report, and a report about current issues in local government standards.
- 2.4 In September 2018 Committee received reports about the Whistleblowing Policy and an amendment to include reference to Modern Slavery, pursuant to a recent Council motion. The Committee also received a report about the outcome of a Standards and Ethics Sub-Committee hearing regarding a breach of the Code of Conduct. The outcome of the hearing was reported to full Council as the sanctions imposed included the removal of the Subject Member from all outside bodies which he was a member of.
- 2.5 In December 2018 the Committee received reports about the reappointment of Parish Council members and the appointment of two new Independent Members to the Standards and Ethics Committee

following a successful recruitment process. The Committee also received a report about the outcome of a further Standards and Ethics Sub-Committee hearing regarding a breach of the Code of Conduct. The Committee also received reports from Internal Audit, about Gifts and Hospitality and financial procedures.

- 2.6 In March 2019 the Committee received a report from Internal Audit about the differences between the requirements for Members and Officers with regards to Declarations for Gifts and Hospitality. The Committee also received a report about the appointment of Standards and Ethics Committee Independent Persons and a further Independent member following a further recruitment exercise.
- 2.7 Also in March 2019 the Committee received a report and presentation about the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), Review of Local Government Ethical Standards. An exercise has subsequently been carried out to identify those areas of best practice which the Council currently complies with along with an action plan of what is required to implement the other recommendations of best practice as put forward by the CSPL.
- 2.8 In May 2019 a Standards and Ethics Committee Sub-Committee heard an allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct at a Town Council and this has been reported to the Standards and Ethics Committee meeting in June 2019.
- 2.9 The Committee received regular reports on complaints received about the conduct of Borough, town and parish councillors and on concerns raised via the Council's Whistleblowing Policy. Further information as to the numbers of complaints received over the period, along with an analysis as to the type of complaints received and a comparison to national figures will be provided at the meeting. Updates on developments in standards were also provided regularly.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The key issues within each item are set out above.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 None.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The Council has a duty under the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council and has delegated that responsibility to the Standards and Ethics Committee.

8. Human Resources Implications

8.1 None.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 None.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

10.1 None

11. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

11.1 None

12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 There is a risk of undermining public confidence in the Council and in local town and parish councils if high ethical standards and high standards of conduct are not maintained.

13. Accountable Officer(s)

Bal Nahal, Head of Legal Services