

Standards Committee



2 December 2024

Title	General update on Standards Matters
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	Karen Limmer Interim Group Head of Corporate Governance
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	n/a
Corporate Priority	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a Committee decision.
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: To note the Report
Reason for Recommendation	Not applicable

1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an update to members on standards issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comply with the Localism Act 2011.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the Constitution and all proper process and procedures are in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review the Forward Plan.

1.1 This report seeks to update members on a number of standards issues.

2. Key issues

2.1 This Committee's terms of reference include the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by councillors and any co-opted members.

2.2 To further this role and function, this report sets out a number of current issues.

2.3 There have been a number of changes to the Constitution over the last year to improve decision making at all meetings of the Council and its Committees

and to clarify the Scheme of Delegation. These continue to be kept under review and will be brought forward at regular intervals and some further proposed amendments are the subject of a further report on the Agenda.

- 2.4 There continues to be a number of Code of Conduct issues, brief details of which are set out in the Members Briefing pack. These include the use of social media, what happens during an election period and post-election, the responsibility for complaints, and behaviour generally.
- 2.5 A review of the rules relating to Gifts and Hospitality has taken place and no changes are currently proposed, other than a reminder to all members and staff, particularly at this time of the year.
- 2.6 A Code of Conduct review has also been considered. The Local Government Association has not brought forward any changes since the introduction of its model Code in 2021 and it is not proposed to review the Code at this point in time.
- 2.7 It is intended that a review of the Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints against Members will be brought to the next Standards Committee for consideration by all members. These are being externally reviewed to ensure that they are fully compliant with the recommendations of the Committee On Standards in Public Life, and taking into account best practice from other local authorities.
- 2.8 Some changes affecting councils were announced recently by the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Communities, Housing and Local Government for consultation. These concerned changes to available sanctions against councillors following breaches of the Code of Conduct. These may include disqualification or suspension which had been repealed in the Localism Act 2011. The Consultation has not yet been issued. When it is this will be reported to this Committee to gather the Council's views and respond back to government. It is generally thought that the sanctions available currently are not sufficient in certain cases.
- 2.9 The second proposed change relates to virtual attendance at council meetings and is the subject of a separate report on this Agenda.
- 2.10 The Corporate peer review also picked up a number of governance/standards issues which will be the subject of further report to ensure that the Council is addressing these actions.
- 2.11 These matters have been put on a Forward Plan of work for this Committee, as well as a number of others, and Members are invited to add items as they wish.

3. Options analysis and proposal

4. This report is to note only. Members may wish to add matters to the Forward Plan.

5. Financial management comments

- 5.1 There are no financial issues arising from this report.

6. Risk management comments

- 6.1 The Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to promote standards of conduct by councillors.
- 6.2 Any failure to have the appropriate processes and procedures in place increases risks around governance of the authority.
- 7. Procurement comments**
- 7.1 There are no procurement issues.
- 8. Legal comments**
- 8.1 The Council is required to comply with the Localism Act 2011 and to promote standards within the Council.
- 9. Other considerations**
- 9.1 None
- 10. Equality and Diversity**
- 11. n/a
- 12. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**
- 12.1 n/a
- 13. Timetable for implementation**
- 13.1 The Forward Plan sets the matters to be brought forward to this Committee.
- 14. Contact**
- 14.1 Karen Limmer Interim Group Head of Corporate Governance

Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.

Background papers: none

Appendices: Forward Plan