

Report

Council



Part 1

Date: 28 November 2017

Subject Standards Committee Annual Report 2016/17

Purpose To present the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2016/17

Author Head of Law and Regulation
Chair of Standards Committee

Ward All wards

Summary This Report presents to Council the fourth Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2016/17. The Annual Report provides information to the Council about the work carried out by the Committee during the previous 12 months and identifies any specific issues that have arisen.

This fourth Annual Report covers the period from September 2016 to October 2017 and follows on from the last report presented to Council in September 2016

Proposal To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2016/17 and to note the forward work programme

Action by Head of Law and Regulation

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Standards Committee
- Head of Finance
- Head of People and Business Change

Signed

Background

1. The Local Government Act 2000 Part III requires the Council to establish a Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of ethical conduct by Councillors, co-opted members and Community Councillors. This role involves advising and training Members on the Code of Conduct, determining any complaints of misconduct, the imposition of sanctions, where appropriate, and considering any applications for dispensation under the Code.
2. The composition and membership of the Standards Committee is prescribed by the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 (as amended) and comprises:-
 - 5 independent members (including an independent chair and vice-Chair)
 - 3 Councillors
 - 1 community council representative.
3. The Standards Committee is required to meet at least once annually in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. In practice, the Committee meets on a scheduled quarterly basis and additional special meetings are arranged, as necessary, to deal with specific matters such as misconduct hearings and requests for dispensation.
4. The Annual Report provides information to the Council about the work carried out by the Committee during the last 12 months and identifies any specific issues that have arisen.
5. This fourth Annual Report covers the period from September 2016 to October 2017 and follows on from the last report presented to Council in September 2016.

The Committee's work in 2016/17

6. The Annual Report summarises the work carried out by the Standards Committee during the past 12 months. The Committee has met on 4 occasions during this period.
7. The Report makes specific reference to the training programme for Councillors, delivered as part of the induction arrangements following the May 2017 elections, in the light of the changes to the ethical standards framework introduced last year and the new Members Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2016. The Committee was pleased that 40 City Councillors and many community councillors attended these training sessions, and the training appeared to be well-received.
8. However, Standards Committee are concerned that there are 10 City Councillors who have still not attended this mandatory training. A letter was sent to each of these individual Councillors from the Chair of the Committee in July 2017, with a copy to the group Business Managers, reminding them that this training is compulsory and urging them to contact the Democratic Services Officer with details of their availability, in order that a further training session can be arranged as soon as possible.
9. There have been significant changes to the membership of the Standards Committee during last year. In September 2016, the independent Chair, Hazel Taylor, came to the end of her second term of office and her vice-Chair John Pickering also retired. Andrew Mitchell and Kerry Watkins were appointed as the two new independent members. Phillip Westwood was appointed as new independent Chair in February 2017 and Andrew Mitchell was appointed as independent Vice-Chair in June 2017.
10. Community Councillor Gerard Hancock also stepped down as the community council representative on the Standards Committee when his term of office as a Langstone Community Councillor ended in May 2017. Standards Committee are recommending to the Council that John

Davies of Bishton Community Council be appointed as the new community council representative.

11. Councillor Phil Hourahine was appointed as a new elected member representative of the Standards Committee in May 2017, to replace Councillor John Guy
12. The Report also highlights the fact that there were again no formal findings of misconduct against any local Councillors during the past 12 months. Three complaints were referred to the Ombudsman about City Councillors in 2016/17. However, none of these complaints was accepted for investigation on the basis that there was no evidence of any serious breaches of the Code. Two complaints were also referred to the Ombudsman regarding alleged breaches of the Code by local community councillors but, again, neither of these complaints was accepted for formal investigation. No complaints were referred to Standards Committee in 2016/17 for hearing and determination.

Forward Work Programme

11. The Annual Report also sets out the priorities for the future work programme.

Financial Summary

- 12 There are no financial implications as the costs of operating and supporting the Standards Committee are covered within existing budgets. Independent members of Standards Committee receive a fixed fee for attendance at and preparation for meetings in accordance with the half daily rates prescribed by the IRP for Wales.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
An ineffective Standards Committee would undermine public confidence in local government and would lead to poor quality decision-making, with the risk of legal challenge, reputational harm to the Council and sanctions imposed on individual Members	H	L	By proactively promoting high standards of ethical conduct among elected Members and officers and delivering effective training, there have been no findings of misconduct and no serious complaints of breaches of the Code.	Standards Committee Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer
Failure to agree key priorities and a structured forward work programme could lead to a reduction in standards and behaviour and undermine the	M	L	The forward work programme sets out a structured basis for reviewing all ethical standards policies and procedures and reviewing training needs and	Standards Committee Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer

effectiveness of the Committee			development.	
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* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The promotion of high standards of ethical conduct among elected Members and officers maintains public confidence in local government and helps to make Newport a Fairer City

Options Available

- (a) To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report and note the forward work programme
- (b) To reject the report and/or ask for further work to be undertaken

Preferred Option and Why

To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report and note the forward work programme

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial implications.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

Set out in the Report.

Staffing Implications: Comments of Head of People and Business Change

There are no staffing implications.

Background Papers

Committee reports and background papers September 2016 to October 2017

Dated: 17 September 2017