

Report

Council



Part 1

Date: 28 November 2023

Subject Standards Committee Annual Report 2022/2023

Purpose To present the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2022/23

Author Head of Law and Standards
Chair of Standards Committee

Ward General

Summary In accordance with the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, Standards Committee are required to make an annual report after the end of each financial year and Council is required to consider that report within 3 months.

The statutory annual report must describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the previous year and, in particular, must include a summary of any reports, actions or recommendations made or referred to the Committee. In addition, the annual report must include an assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the Council have complied with their new duties to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within their groups.

This Annual Report covers the period from November 2022 to March 2023 and follows-on from the last report presented to Council in November 2022. This is a shorter reporting period to support alignment with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Proposal To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2022/2023 and to note the forward work programme.

Action by Head of Law and Standards

Timetable Immediate

Signed

Background

1. Standards Committee have presented an Annual Report to the Council over the past 10 years, which provides information about the work carried out by the Committee during the previous 12 months, identifies particular issues that have arisen and sets out the forward work programme for the forthcoming year. The previous annual report was presented to Council on 22nd November 2022 and covered the 12-month period from November 2021 to November 2022.
2. Since May 2022, there has been a statutory requirement under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for Standards Committee to make an annual report as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year and for full Council to consider that report within 3 months. The statutory report must describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the previous year and, in particular, must include a summary of any reports, actions or recommendations made or referred to the Committee. In addition, the Annual Report must include an assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the Council have complied with their new duties to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within their groups. Copies of the Standards Committee Annual Report must also be provided to the Ombudsman and all of the local community councils.
3. In order to align with the financial year, as recommended by the Annual Report for 2021/22 to meet the new legislation, this report considers a shorter reporting period of December 2022 to March 2023.
4. A draft of the Annual Report for 2022/23 is attached for comment and approval prior to its presentation to the next meeting of full Council on 28th November 2023.
5. The Report confirms that, once again, no serious complaints of misconduct were referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman during the period December 2022 and March 2023 and no complaints were referred for determination by the Committee under Stage 3 of the Local Resolution Protocol.
6. The training requirements for City Councillors, community councils and their clerks will continue to be monitored as part of the Committee's forward work programme. The Committee will also be undertaking a review to ensure that all mandatory training has been completed and that all declarations of acceptance of office and registers of members' interests have been completed properly, following the May elections
7. The Annual Report also contains a draft forward work programme for the forthcoming 12 months.

Financial Summary

8. There are no financial implications.

Risks

9. This report is a retrospective consideration of the work of the Standards Committee.

| Risk Title / Description | Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (1-5) | Risk Probability of risk occurring (1-5) | Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect? | Risk Owner Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk? |
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| 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 | 4 | 1 | 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 effectiveness of the Committee | 3 | 1 | The forward work programme sets out a structured basis for reviewing all ethical standards policies and procedures and reviewing training needs and development | Standards Committee Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer |

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

10. The Nolan principles, which underpin the ethical standards framework, and principles of good governance, are all enshrined in the Council's corporate and well-being objectives.

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

Proposed Action

- (a) To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report and note the forward work Programme

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

12. There are no financial implications.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

13. Included in the Report.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

14. The Annual Report assists the Standards Committee and the Council in improving ethical standards.

There are no human resources arising from the report.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

15. The principles of fairness and equality are embodied within the Members Code of Conduct and the Ethical Framework. No FEIA is required, as the Annual Report is for information purposes only.

- There are no negative impacts in terms of equalities or social disadvantage.
- In terms of the sustainable development principle and 5 ways of working

Long-term – The Annual Report will assist Standards Committee and the Council in taking a long-term view about improving ethical standards

Prevention – The Annual Report guide will help to prevent future complaints of misconduct

Integration – The Annual Report has been produced in consultation with key stakeholders

Collaboration – The Annual Report will assist people in interacting with councils and elected members, in a more collaborative way. It will also facilitate collaboration between Standards Committees in discussing matters of common interest.

Involvement – The Annual Report will encourage greater involvement in reporting and resolving complaints

Consultation

16. No comments at this stage.

Background Papers

17. There are no additional background papers.

Dated: 20th November 2023