
STANDARDS & ETHICS COMMITTEE: 9th DECEMBER 2020

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND
LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Reason for this Report

1. To enable the Committee to consider the content of its Annual Report 2019/20 and approve arrangements for the report to be finalised and presented to full Council.

Background

2. In order to maintain the profile of the Standards and Ethics Committee and awareness of the importance of high standards of Member conduct, the Committee prepares an annual report for presentation to full Council each year.
3. The Committee's Annual Report 2018/19 was presented to full Council by the Chair of the Committee in February 2020 and was well received. The Chair referred to the Committee's consideration of the Members' Survey outcomes and highlighted conduct issues relating to social media. The Lord Mayor thanked the Chair and the Committee for their report.

Issues

4. The Committee is invited to consider and provide comments on the contents of its Annual Report 2019/20, which is recommended to be presented to full Council in January 2021.
5. Based on the standard format of previous annual reports and the work undertaken by the Committee during the last year, suggested contents include:
 - a) Chair's Foreword – the Chair may wish to set the context for the report, noting that the work of the Committee has been inevitably affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the essential business priorities of the Council during this period. Also, to explain the changes in the Committee's membership due to the Independent Member vacancies which arose unexpectedly last year and to welcome the new Independent Members .

- b) Principles of public life – to remind Members of the ten general principles of public life based on the principles originally set down by the Nolan Committee in 1995.
- c) Role of the Committee – to set out the Committee’s terms of reference and how the Committee approaches its role
- d) Work undertaken by the Committee during 2019/20:
 - i. Independent Member vacancies – the Committee approved the public appointments process and set up an Appointments Panel, to recruit and select 3 new Independent Members to fill the vacancies which arose.
 - ii. Member Conduct Hearing – a Hearings Panel was set up to determine a complaint referred to the Committee by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Hearings Procedure was reviewed and updated. A 5 day hearing was held in January 2020, which involved a significant amount of work for Panel members and support staff and attracted considerable publicity. The decision of the Hearings Panel was appealed and upheld by the Adjudication Panel for Wales. To note that the Ombudsman commended the Council for the extremely professional way in which the hearing was managed in very challenging circumstances and personally attended a Committee meeting to thank the Committee for the support they gave in maintaining high standards in the Council.
 - iii. Gifts and hospitality received by Members – to report on the Committee’s routine review of the Members Hospitality Register
 - iv. Officers Personal Interests– to report on the Committee’s further consideration of the disclosure requirements relating to senior officers’ personal interests.
 - v. Observation of meetings - to note the Committee’s feedback following observation of meetings of full Council and Community Council meetings.
- e) Complaints about Member conduct – to give an overview of complaints reported during the year.
- f) Meeting with Group Leaders and Whips - To report that the Committee’s annual meeting with group leaders and whips was postponed until September 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. To highlight key points from the discussion about outcomes of the Members Survey 2019/20 in relation to Member conduct and behaviour issues.
- g) Future work priorities, to reflect the Committee’s Forward Work Plan 2020/21

- h) Committee members biographies and Committee meeting attendance figures
 - i) Contact details for the Chair, the Monitoring Officer and the Ombudsman.
6. The Committee is invited to consider the contents of its Annual Report 2019/20 and provide any appropriate comments.

Legal Implications

7. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Provide comments on the contents of the Committee's Annual Report 2019/20;
- 2) Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair, to draft and finalise the Annual Report, having regard to comments provided by Members of the Committee; and
- 3) Ask the Chair to present the Annual Report to full Council in January 2021.

Davina Fiore

Director of Governance and Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

27th November 2020

Background papers

Council report 'Standards & Ethics Committee Annual Report', February 2020; and minutes

Standards and Ethics Committee minutes 1st and 30th July 2019; and 11th December 2019