

Standards Committee

2 November 2020

Standards Best Practice Report

Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Electoral division: Not applicable

Summary

The Committee for Standards in Public Life has asked the County Council to outline how it meets published best practice guidance. The response attached as the appendix was sent in October 2020.

Recommendations

- (1) That the response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life be noted.
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Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 In January 2019 the Committee for Standards in Public Life published a report on Local Government Ethical Standards. It identified some best practice recommendations to improve ethical standards in local government which it would expect every local authority to implement.
- 1.2 The Standards Committee considered the report at its meeting in March 2019 and supported the best practice recommendations, noting that most were already in place at the County Council. It asked the Director of Law and Assurance to consider ways to make changes to two areas of practice to ensure that the County Council complied with the best practice.
- 1.3 In July 2019 the Committee agreed to make two changes to the Standards regime to comply with the best practice. The first was to add an explicit sentence to the Code of Conduct form to make it clear that the member submitting the form is also signing up to the Code of Conduct. This will be implemented in May 2021, following the County Council elections.
- 1.4 The second change was to include a specific statement in the County Council's Annual Governance Statement about separate bodies which the County Council owns and has set up, including confirmation that they are abiding by the Nolan principles of openness and publish their board agendas, minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The Chairman of the Committee for Standards in Public Life sent a survey to local authorities in September 2020 to ask them to set out how well they comply with the published best practice.
- 2.2 The County Council is generally compliant with the best practice standards and the appendix sets out the response to the survey.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 Finance

- 5.1 There are no revenue budget consequences.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Reputational risks and risks to decision-making through members not maintaining high standards.	Implementing the changes in July 2019 meant that the County Council is generally compliant with the Committee for Standards in Public Life's best practice, assisting the Committee in its role to promote high standards of conduct.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1 The County Council's code of conduct is aligned to the published best practice, which gives assurance that it is fit for purpose.

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Appendices – Response from the Director of Law and Assurance to the Committee for Standards in Public Life's survey, October 2020.

Background papers – None.