

## **Draft Annual Report of the Constitution and Standards Committee 2018/19**

Lead Member: Cllr William Wallace, Chair of the Committee

Lead Officer: Scott Wooldridge, Strategic Manager - Governance and Democratic Services

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The Constitution and Standards Committee is required by the Constitution to make an annual report to the County Council regarding its work since May 2018.
- 1.2. The Constitution and Standards Committee was formed following the May 2017 elections and its functions include responsibility to maintain an effective, up to date and legally compliant Constitution; considering proposals from Council committees for changes to the constitutional arrangements of the Council; take all required decisions in respect of the County Council elections; promoting high standards of conduct by Members, Co-opted Members and Officers; monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 **That the Committee considers and comments upon this draft Annual Report to the County Council meeting on 15 May 2019 and delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to finalise it following consultation with the Chair of the Committee.**

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. The Council at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017 agreed to amalgamate the Constitution Committee and the Standards Committee to form a new Constitution and Standards Committee. In making this decision the Council considered the recommendations from both committees supporting an amalgamation.
- 3.2. Political proportionality was waived in relation to the elected membership of the Committee with one member per political group appointed. The co-opted members of the former Standards Committee were appointed to the new Committee as non-voting members and with a renewed term of office. In line with other committees, the County Council appoints the Chair of the Committee.
- 3.3. The Committee's operating arrangements are well-established and it is working well within its terms of reference.
- 3.4. The Committee has met a total of 4 times since May 2018.
- 3.5. Support to the Committee comes principally from the Monitoring Officer and County Solicitor.

## **4. Work Programme**

4.1. The Committee's work programme over the last year has been varied and has included:

- Disclosure and Barring Service checks for elected members (July and October 2018)
- Empowerment of the Interim Director of Finance (July 2018)
- Meeting procedure rules, Scrutiny call-in procedure and Public Question Time rules (July 2018)
- Access to Information – Audio Recordings of Council meetings (July 2018)
- Changing the names of Electoral Divisions (July 2018 and October 2018)
- Review of the Whistleblowing Policy (October 2018)
- Review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements (October 2018)
- Annual review of Contract Standing Orders (February 2019)
- Annual review of Financial Regulations (February 2019)
- Review of ethical standards in local government (Government consultation)
- Annual review of the Constitution (May 2019)
- Annual report of the Committee to Council (May 2019)

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1. The Committee remains committed to promoting high standards of conduct by Members, Co-opted Members and Officers and for the policies and processes which support this aim, together with ensuring that the Council maintains an effective, up to date and legally compliant Constitution.

## **7. Consultations undertaken**

7.1. The Committee meetings are open to all County Councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings.

## **8. Implications**

8.1. The Committee considers carefully, and often asks for further information about the implications as outlined in, the reports considered at its meetings.

8.2. For further details of the reports considered by the Committee please contact the author of this report.

## **9. Background papers**

9.1. Further information about the Committee including dates of meetings, agendas and reports from previous meetings are available via the Council's website and can be found at:

<http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/boards.asp?boardnum=9>

**Note:** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author