

Annual Report of the Standards Committee

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1. Summary

- 1.1.** The Standards Committee is required by the Constitution to make an annual report to the County Council. This report covers the period between April 2023 and March 2024. The Annual Report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2.** The Standards Committee was formed following the May 2022 elections. Its role includes promoting high standards of conduct by for Members of the Council and Co-opted Members of the Council's committees.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** That the Committee comment on the draft annual report set out in Appendix 1 for submission to the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2024.

3. Background

- 3.1.** The Standards Committee is one of several committees of the Council. Its functions and responsibilities are set out in the Council's Constitution.
- 3.2.** At the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2023, the Council agreed to waive the political proportionality rules in relation to the elected membership of the committee with instead the membership being based upon one member from each of the political groups being appointed. Five co-opted members also form part of the membership of the committee. In line with other committees, the Council appoints the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.
- 3.3.** The committee has met seven times since April 2023. The committee has established three task and finish working groups which are focused on reviewing the Members Code of Conduct (including gifts and hospitality), improving adoption of the Council's Code of Conduct by Somerset's 279 city, town and parish councils and reviewing the Officer Code of Conduct.

4. Implications

- 4.1.** Legal: The Constitution requests that the Standards Committee submit an Annual Report to Council each year.
- 4.2.** Risk: There are no risks arising from the submission of this report.
- 4.3.** Equalities: There are no direct equalities implications arising from the Annual Report. The work of the committee is intended to promote positive outcomes in relation to equalities and diversity.

5. Background papers

- 5.1.** Somerset Council Constitution