

Annual Report of the Constitution and Standards Committee

Lead Member: Cllr William Wallace, Chair of the Committee

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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. This report covers the period between June 2019 and December 2020 due to the impacts of Covid19 on reporting earlier in 2020.
- 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 Council receives and notes the report on the Committee's work.**

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council at its meeting on 24th May 2017 agreed to amalgamate the Constitution Committee and the Standards Committee to form a new Constitution and Standards Committee.
- 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 2019.
- 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 (June 2019)
- Ethical Standards in Local Government-Report from Committee for Standards in Public Life. (June 2019)
- Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Protocol. (June 2019)
- Review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements (January 2020)
- Update of the Health and Wellbeing Board Constitution (January 2020)
- Officer Code of Conduct. (January 2020)
- Proposed Changes to the Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders. (February 2020)
- Ethical Standards in Local Government – Model Code of Conduct (July 2020)
- Annual report on standards of conduct 2019/20. (July 2020)
- Report of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive – Review of the Emergency Democratic and Decision-Making Arrangements for the Council. (July 2020)
- Whistleblowing Policy review (Dec 2020)
- Review of Members Code of Conduct (Dec 2020)
- Committee membership update. (Dec 2020)

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://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=244&Year=0m>

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