

Report to Standards Committee

Subject: Update on implementation of the best practice recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life Report – Review of Local Government Ethical Standards.

Date: 12 March 2020

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1. Purpose of the Report

To update Standards Committee in relation to progress against the agreed action plan to implement the best practice recommendations set out in the Committee on Standards in Public Life report following the review of local government ethical standards and to seek approval for the process to respond to the consultation on the model Code of Conduct.

Recommendations

THAT:

- 1) The progress made to implement the best practice recommendations set out in the Committee on Standards in Public Life report at Appendix 1 be noted;
- 2) A working group be set up to give views on an appropriate response to the consultation being carried out by the Local Government Association on a model Code of Conduct; and
- 3) The Monitoring Officer in consultation with the working group be authorised to prepare the consultation response to the Local Government Association in relation to the model Code of Conduct on behalf of the Standards Committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report on Ethical Standards in Public Life was initially considered by the Standards Committee on 21 February 2019 and it was agreed that steps be taken to introduce all the best

practice recommendations in order to demonstrate the Committee's continued commitment to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council. At the meeting on 4 July 2019, the Standards Committee agreed an action plan for implementing those best practice recommendations.

2.2 A copy of the action plan showing progress against each action is attached at Appendix 1. Key achievements since the last meeting include the following:

- a) The register of gifts and hospitality for Members was published on the website at the end of quarter 3 in CSV format and will be published on a quarterly basis.
- b) Meeting with Customer Insight Officer to discuss appropriate method of consultation held on 13 January 2020.
- c) Confirmation has been received from Parish Councils that they have adopted the GBC Code of Conduct and training for all parish councillors who wish to receive it is planned for 16 March 2020.

2.3 The Standards Committee also made an additional recommendation to explore support which can be put in place for elected Members who are suffering bullying and intimidation. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer should write to all Borough and Parish Councillors requesting evidence of specific examples of bullying, intimidation or threats they have experienced. This is subject to a separate report on the agenda.

2.4 Members may recall that the CSPL also made a number of recommendations which required changes in legislation or action from other bodies. One of the recommendations was that the Local Government Association (LGA) should create an updated model Code of Conduct in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government. The Board of the LGA at its meeting on 11 September 2019 considered and agreed to commence reviewing of the Code ahead of central government's response to the recommendations of the report. This work is part of a wider programme of work on civility in public life and in response to rising local government concern about the increasing incidence of public, member-to-member and officer/member intimidation and abuse and overall behavioural standards and expectations in public debate, decision making and engagement.

2.5 The model Code is being drafted and expected to be considered by the LGA Executive on 12 March. If approved, an indicative timetable for consultation is w/c 16 March to 24 April; with the final Code to be approved and launched at the end of June 2020. The Nottinghamshire Monitoring Officers intend to meet to discuss the draft Code during the consultation period.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Committee notes the progress made to implement the best practice recommendations set out in the Committee on Standards in Public Life report at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 In view of the indicative timescales set out by the LGA, it is proposed that a working group is set up to consider the draft model Code of Conduct and delegated authority is given to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with that working group to prepare the final consultation response on behalf of the Standards Committee.

4. Resources Implications

None.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Updated action plan for implementation of the best practice recommendations.

6. Background papers

Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life
Local Government Ethical Standards - A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-ethical-standards-report>