



Report of Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Service and Monitoring Officer

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To agree the Work Programme for 2021/2022.

Executive summary

- 2 There is no requirement for the Committee to have a work programme. However, it is considered good practice to have one as it helps demonstrate the work done by the Committee in promoting and maintaining high standards of ethical conduct throughout the year.
- 3 On 13 March 2020, the Committee approved a work programme in relation to the roles and functions of the Committee for the municipal year 2020/21. The review of the work programme was considered by the Committee on 3 March 2021. It was agreed that the work programme for 2021/2022 would be considered at the first Committee meeting of the new municipal year.

Recommendations

- 4 The Standards Committee is recommended to:
 - (a) note the progress against the work programme approved on 13 March 2020 for 2020/21.
 - (b) Comment on the draft work programme for 2021/22 shown at Appendix 3 of the report.
 - (c) Agree the work programme for 2021/22.

Background

- 5 The terms of reference of the Standards Committee are set out in Article 7 of the Constitution. They are as follows:
- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members;
 - (b) assisting Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct and where appropriate, the Planning Code of Practice;
 - (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Planning Code of Practice;
 - (d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Planning Code of Practice;
 - (e) advising, training or arranging to train Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct and Planning Code of Practice;
 - (f) granting dispensations to Members and Co-opted Members of the Council from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct and Planning Code of Practice in circumstances where this function has not been delegated to the Monitoring Officer;
 - (g) the assessment and/or referral for investigation of allegations of misconduct on the part of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members, if requested to undertake this function by the Monitoring Officer;
 - (h) the determination of allegations of misconduct on the part of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members;
 - (i) dealing with any alleged breach by a Member of a Council Protocol, in accordance with procedures approved by the Committee;
 - (j) overview of the Officers' Code of Conduct; and
 - (k) overview of the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

Work Programme 2020/21

- 6 The Committee reviewed the progress against the work programme for 2020/21 at its meeting on 3 March 2021. A copy of the work programme with the details of when the items were considered is shown at Appendix 2 of this report for information.
- 7 The Committee on 3 March 2021 noted that there had been disruption to the meeting schedule and the work programme for 2020/21 which had arose from the Covid-19 restrictions on meetings. The meetings of June and September 2020 were cancelled as a result.
- 8 In addition to the meetings reported as shown in Appendix 2, an informal meeting of the standards committee took place on 21 July 2020 for members of the Committee and the Independent Persons to comment on the Local Government Association model code of conduct consultation.
- 9 From the work programme 2020/21 the social media toolkit was not considered by the Committee due to the disruption of meetings. However, the member social media toolkit was published shortly before the election in May 2021 and has been covered as part of the Members Induction Programme. The toolkit covers Members responsibilities in relation to social media, practical tips on how to use social media effectively and safely as well as what to do in the event they experience trolling or abuse. It is proposed that a review of the social media toolkit is undertaken by the Committee towards the end of 2021/22.

Work Programme 2021/22

- 10 The Committee is asked to agree the work programme for the municipal year. A copy of the draft work programme for 2021/22 is shown at Appendix 3.
- 11 The work programme provides the Committee with a number of key items to be reviewed throughout the year as well as standing agenda items.
- 12 It is proposed that there is a review of the code of conduct complaints procedure to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, legally compliant and consistent with best practice. This review will also include the process for rejecting complaints including those which are considered vexatious or habitual complainant.
- 13 As this has been an election year it is considered a timely opportunity to review the appointment of the Town and Parish co-opted members and the procedure to be adopted for future appointments to the Standards Committee.

- 14 Member development and training is considered a cornerstone in promoting high ethical standards. Following the 2021 elections a member induction programme has been developed and delivered. It is therefore proposed that the Committee evaluate the Member Induction Programme.
- 15 It is recognised that there is flexibility in the work programme to include any other issues which arise throughout the year. For example, it is anticipated that the Government will publish its response to the Committee in Standards in Public Life Report published in January 2019.

Background papers

- None.

Other useful documents

- None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council has a duty under s. 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and to adopt a code of conduct that is consistent with the Nolan Principles. It is anticipated that a planned work programme to deal with the specific roles and functions of the Committee, as set out in the Constitution, will assist compliance with this duty.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

Appendix 2: Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting	Item	Date Considered
4 June 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of national standards picture. 2. Complaints update. 3. Appoint of Independent Persons. 4. Review of Member Guidance on the use of Social Media. 	<p>Deferred due to cancellation</p> <p>Deferred due to cancellation</p> <p>9 December 2020</p> <p>Not considered in 2020/21</p>
4 September 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of national standards picture. 2. Complaints update. 3. Annual Report 2019/2020. 	<p>Deferred due to cancellation</p> <p>Deferred due to cancellation</p> <p>9 December 2020</p>
9 December 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Review of national standards picture. 2. Complaints update. 	<p>9 December 2020</p> <p>9 December 2020</p>
3 March 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of national standards picture. 2. Complaints update. 3. Work programme review. 4. LGA Model Code of Conduct. 	<p>3 March 2021</p> <p>3 March 2021</p> <p>3 March 2021</p> <p>3 March 2021</p>

Appendix 3: Draft Work Programme 2021/22

Summer 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirmation of appointment of Independent Persons.• Annual Report 2021/22• Work Programme 201/22• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.
Autumn 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.• Review of Code of Conduct complaints procedure.• Co-opted membership on the Standards Committee.
Winter 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.• Evaluation of Member Training and Development.•
Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.• Social Media Guidance review.• Review of Work Programme 2021/22.• Work Programme 2022/23.