

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Local Government Ethical Standards – Best Practice Recommendations

Meeting/Date: Corporate Governance Committee – 2nd October 2019

Executive Portfolio: Councillor G J Bull, Executive Leader

Report by: Elections and Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This report provides Members with a review of the Council's processes in light of the review undertaken by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) on ethical standards and review of the effectiveness of the arrangements introduced by the Localism Act 2011. The CPSL undertook a detailed review in 2018 seeking evidence from all interested stakeholders that resulted in a number of recommendations and identified best practice to improve ethical standards in local government.

At their last meeting Members considered the report by the CSPL and agreed that a further report be presented to their next meeting reviewing the best practice recommendations for local authorities as a benchmark of good ethical practice and whether any changes were necessary to the Council's processes.

The Committee is

RECOMMENDED

to consider the best practice recommendations of the Review of Local Government Ethical Standards and proposed changed to the Council's processes.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to review the best practice recommendations as a benchmark of good ethical practice as detailed in the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) review that was presented to Members at their last meeting on 25th July 2019 and compare these against the Council's current processes to establish whether any changes are necessary.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced significant changes to the way that conduct of elected councillors was handled. It abolished a national framework headed by a regulator and a national Code of Conduct and removed powers to suspend or disqualify councillors for serious breaches of the Code of Conduct. Instead it placed a duty on councils to: adopt their own local Code; to put local procedures in place to investigate allegations the Code may have broken, with principal authorities carrying out that duty for town/parish councils; and to appoint at least one Independent Person whose views they had to take into account when considering matters under investigation.
- 2.2 The CSPL undertook to review the effectiveness of the arrangements once they had bedded in. They undertook a detailed review during 2018 seeking evidence from all interested stakeholders and issued its report in January 2019.

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The CSPL have made some best practice recommendations which are directed at local authorities. The table attached at Appendix A outlines the best practice recommendations and issues for the Committee to consider. Whilst some gaps exist in the current arrangements, there are a number of provisions that are already covered and it is proposed that the Committee consider the comments attached and action required, with a view to providing further updates on progress at future meetings.
- 3.2 For ease of reference a copy of the current Code of Conduct is attached at Appendix B.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Under Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members. In discharging its duty the Council must, in particular, adopt a code dealing with the conduct that is expected of Members of the authority when they are acting in that capacity. Huntingdonshire District Council's Code of Conduct and standards arrangements were adopted at full Council in July 2012 and Town/Parish Councils across the District have also predominantly adopted the Huntingdonshire District Council Code.

5. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 5.1 The CSPL have undertaken a review of ethical standards in local government. High standards of conduct in local government are needed to demonstrate that decisions being taken are in the public interest to maintain confidence. It is expected that their best practice recommendations should be implemented and a review will be undertaken the implementation in 2020.

6. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A - CSPL – Best Practice Recommendations Action Plan
Appendix B – HDC Code of Conduct

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Local Government Ethical Standards: A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, January 2019](#)

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