

## **STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

### **24 OCTOBER 2018**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**

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### **Recommendation**

**1. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services recommends that the Committee:**

**(a) notes the visit to the Council by the National Committee on Standards in Public Life as part of its review of standards in local government; and**

**(b) notes the anticipated publication of its report in the New Year 2019.**

### **Summary**

2. The National Committee on Standards and Public Life (NCSPL, sometimes called the "Nolan Committee") invited responses to its consultation to inform its review of local government ethical standards. This consultation was reported to the Standards and Ethics Committee in April 2018, which debated the consultation issues and decided a response to be sent on behalf of the Council. In the light of that response, the NCSPL asked to visit the Council as part of its gathering of evidence of good practice in local government.

### **Background information**

3. The National Committee on Standards and Public Life (NCSPL) considers that robust standards arrangements are needed to safeguard local democracy, maintain high standards of conduct, and to protect ethical practice in local government. It is examining the structures, processes and practices in local government in England for:

- maintaining member codes of conduct
- investigating alleged breaches fairly and with due process
- enforcing codes and imposing sanctions for misconduct
- declaring interests and managing conflicts of interests, and
- whistleblowing.

4. The review will also assess whether the existing structures, processes and practices are conducive to high standards of conduct in local government, make any recommendations for how they can be improved, and to note any evidence of any intimidation of councillors.

5. The visit to the Council took place on 11 September. The delegation was led by NCSPL member Dr Jane Martin (formerly local government Ombudsman) and supported by their secretariat.

6. The NCSPL took evidence from the Chairman and other members of the Committee, representatives of each of the political groups, and an Independent Person (as well as 2 Independent members of the committee), as well as the Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

7. Dr Martin was kind enough to write and say the delegation was impressed by the leadership demonstrated by senior officers and members of the Council, which has allowed the Council to cultivate a culture of high standards and a civil approach to politics. They considered it particularly insightful to see how proper governance structures have a substantial influence on the way in which ethical standards operate at the Council.

8. The Council will be informed nearer the time of the launch of the NCSPL's report and receive a copy of it, anticipated to be in the New Year.

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

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### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.