

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Council – 21 March 2018
Subject: Annual Report and Forward Plan of the Committee on Standards in Public Life
Report of: City Solicitor

Summary

To provide an overview of the Annual Report and Forward Plan of the Committee on Standards in Public life.

Recommendations

1. That Council notes the Annual Report and Forward Plan of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
 2. That Members consider whether the Council should take any action arising from the content of the Annual Report and Forward Plan.
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Wards Affected: All

Financial Consequences: None directly.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Background

1.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life ('the Committee) is an independent advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB). The Committee monitors, reports and makes recommendations on all issues relating to standards in public life. This includes not only the standards of conduct of holders of public office, but all those involved in the delivery of public services.

The Committee's full terms of reference are set out on page 16 of the Annual Report, which is attached as an Appendix to this report.

1.2 The Committee's strategic objectives are to:

- Identify areas of concern in terms of conduct and behaviour before they develop into activities that could result in a breach of public trust.
- Undertake inquiries and use the research gathered to develop evidence based practical recommendations to help maintain / improve ethical standards.
- Make informed contribution to public debates about ethical standards, including submissions to public consultations;
- Proactively identify and respond to emerging ethical risk and collaborate with partners to develop the ethical standards agenda.

1.3 In July 2017, the Committee published its Annual Report for 2016-17, together with a Forward Plan for 2017-18. Pages 5-12 of the Annual Report provide an overview of the activities undertaken by the Committee during 2016-17 and include:

- Maintaining a watching brief over local government standards, engaging with key stakeholders to identify areas of concern in relation to the conduct of elected and co-opted members of local authorities.
- Submission of evidence to Commons Community and Local Government Select Committee on local government scrutiny, drawing attention to findings from the 2015 report '*Tone from the top – leadership, ethics and accountability in policing*' including; accountability being essential to create a culture where high standards of behaviour are the norm, and the necessity for effective, independent scrutiny being required between the four yearly election cycle to maintain accountability.
- Examining areas of conduct of 'all those involved in the delivery of public services', not solely those appointed or elected to public office.
- The publication of '*Striking the Balance: Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life in Regulation, ethical standards for regulatory bodies*';
- A review of conduct in referendums following the EU membership referendum, which resulted in public concerns being raised;

- Submissions made to assist the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's inquiry into the impact of 'fake news' on democracy;
- The publication of research into public attitudes to political party funding, exploring public confidence in the integrity in such funding;
- The committee also conducted work in relation to; MPs' outside interests; MPs' business costs and expenses; and the induction of MPs;

1.4 The Committee's Forward Plan provides that the Committee will undertake the following activities during 2017/18:

- Undertake research and engage with partners in relation to local government standards. This review will be based on the consultation to be launched in early 2018, with the findings and recommendations being published in 2018;
- Undertake follow up research on the 2014 report and 2015 guidance on '*Ethical Standards for Providers of Public Services*'. The findings will be published in late 2017;
- Undertake work to assess the impact of social media and how such developments are shaping public life;
- Maintain a watching brief to keep abreast of standards issues before and whilst they are emerging, responding appropriately;
- Further engagement with stakeholders in relation to the funding of political parties;
- The review of MP's outside interests will be published in late 2017;
- Maintain a watchful brief over how the conduct of referendums and their campaigns may be improved for future referendums.

Recommendations:-

1. That Council notes the Annual Report and Forward Plan of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
2. That Members consider whether the Council should take any action arising from the content of the Annual Report and Forward Plan.