

SUBJECT:	Committee on Standards in Public Life Annual Report
REPORT OF:	Monitoring Officer
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Joanna Swift Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
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WARD/S AFFECTED	None

1. Purpose of Report

This report draws members' attention to the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) Annual Report for 2016-17 and its Forward Plan for the coming year.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report is noted and members consider whether they wish to submit a formal response to the CSPL's forthcoming consultation on local government standards.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

Awareness of the work undertaken by the CSPL in the area of standards and ethics supports the Committee's general responsibility to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

3. Content of Report

- 3.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) is an independent advisory, non-departmental body which advises the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in England. It monitors and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders including members of local authorities.
- 3.2 The CSPL publishes an annual report and an extract from its 2016 -17 Report entitled "Setting the Standard" is attached as an Appendix. This contains the Forward by the Chairman, an overview of work undertaken during the year and the Forward Plan for 2017-18. The full document is available on the CSPL website at:
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626271/Setting_the_Standard - Strategic Plan Annual Report 2016-17 _Forward Plan 2017-18.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626271/Setting_the_Standard_-_Strategic_Plan_Annual_Report_2016-17__Forward_Plan_2017-18.pdf)
- 3.3 In relation to local government standards the CSPL maintains a watching brief and regularly receives correspondence on the issue. In 2016-17 they started to engage with key stakeholders in identifying areas of concern surrounding the conduct of elected and co-opted local authority members. In March 2017 the CSPL submitted evidence to the Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee on local government scrutiny, drawing attention to findings from their 2015 report *Tone from the Top - Leadership, ethics and accountability in policing*. This submission set out how accountability is seen as an

essential element in creating a culture where high standards of behaviour are the norm. In particular the report emphasised the importance of effective independent scrutiny in between the four-yearly elections cycle to maintain accountability. The CSPL encouraged the new Communities and Local Government Select Committee to take up this issue in the new Parliament.

- 3.4 In 2013 the CSPL published a report called "Standards Matter" which outlined concerns about the issues that could arise in local government standards following the Localism Act 2011 and commented that: "The new, slimmed down arrangements have yet to prove themselves sufficient for their purpose. We have considerable doubt that they will succeed in doing so and intend to monitor the situation closely". As set out in their Forward Plan the CSPL intend to undertake a review of local government standards during 2017-18 starting with a public consultation early in 2018. Based on the submissions to this review and meetings with key stakeholders, the Committee intends to publish their findings and recommendations in 2018. Members are invited to consider whether they would wish to make a formal submission.

4. Consultation

Not applicable at this stage

5. Options

The Committee has the option not to engage with the CSPL consultation.

6. Corporate Implications

Financial – None

Legal – None

Risks issues – Not applicable.

Equalities - None

7. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Whilst there are no direct links to the main policy objectives, the Council has a duty under the Localism Act to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

8. Next Steps

A further report would be brought to the Committee once the consultation period opens in 2018

Background Papers:	None except those referred to in the report.
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