

SUBJECT	Committee on Standards in Public Life Annual Report
RELEVANT MEMBER	Councillor David Anthony- Chairman Audit and Standards Committee
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 2018-19.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report is noted.

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 2018 -19 Report is attached as an Appendix. This contains the Forward by the Chairman, an overview of work undertaken during the year, its current work plan. The full document is available on the CSPL website at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821702/CSPL_Annual_Report_18_19.pdf
- 3.3 Members will note that the CSPL has published one major report during the year on ethical standards in Local Government. The recommendations and best practice suggestions made by the CSPL were considered and noted by this Committee at their meeting on 9 April.

- 3.4 In March 2019, the CSPL launched a new review into whether the existing frameworks and regulations in relation to Artificial intelligence are sufficient to ensure that high standards of conduct are upheld as the use of these technologies becomes more widespread. The launch of this review followed two months' desk research into the impact of artificial intelligence on public services in the UK and international approaches to AI ethics. CSPL will draft the report in the autumn following further meetings and research, aiming to publish in early 2020.
- 3.5 The CSPL has been working actively to follow up their December 2017 report, Intimidation in public life - a review the Committee undertook at the request of the Prime Minister in July 2017. In that report there were 33 recommendations to government, social media companies, political parties, press organisations, MPs, candidates and other public office-holders. The Government responded formally to the report in March 2018 committing to action on most of the recommendations made to government. One of these was amending the rules which apply to local elections and removing the requirement for candidates standing as local councillors to have their home addresses published on the ballot paper and statement of persons nominated. CSPL have been actively following up responses to their recommendations and have received further responses from social media companies, political parties, the press regulators and the National Police Chiefs' Council. In particular, CSPL has been working with political parties on a joint approach to tackling intimidation.
- 3.6 The report also refers to progress on the CSPL recommendations from 2018 about MPs' Outside Interests. The majority of the recommendations require changes to the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members. The Commons Committee on Standards has stated that it proposes to undertake a comprehensive review of the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules, involving public consultation.
- 3.7 CSPL has also continued to take a close and serious interest in the issue of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment of MPs and House of Commons staff first reported in autumn 2017.
- 3.8 Members will note that the CSPL intends to monitor and review the uptake of their best practice suggestions in 2020. The CSPL will continue its work in this complex area of standards - identifying areas for review, promoting good practice and evaluating progress against their recommendations. CSPL will also continue to test those Principles with the public and against new technology as evidenced by their Artificial Intelligence review.

4. Consultation

Not applicable

5. Corporate Implications

Financial – None

Legal – None

Risks issues – Not applicable.

Equalities - None

6. Unitary Implications (if applicable)

The standards arrangements for the new Council are being developed and will form part of the Constitution. These will need to have regard to relevant best practise suggestions made by the CSPL.

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

In accordance with the Committee's work programme a report on the standards arrangements for the new unitary Council is due to come to this Committee at their meeting on 19 March 2020.

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

Appendix 1 –CSPL Annual Report 2018-2019