

Standards Committee 10 October 2017

PROPOSED ANNUAL REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL

Officer contact: Julie Openshaw District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer 01494 421252 julie.openshaw@wycombe.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

PROPOSED DECISION

To approve, within Standards Committee's work programme, the provision of an annual report from Standards Committee to full Council, each Spring, setting out the work of the Committee during the past year.

Reason for Decision

To comply with best practice in terms of the Local Code of Governance and allow full Council an improved opportunity to note and review the Committee's work on an annual basis.

Corporate Implications

1. The publishing of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, is the formal reporting of the Council's governance arrangements; it is an opportunity to report on the quality of those arrangements and identify any actions to improve upon them. Regulation 6 imposes a requirement, each financial year, to prepare an Annual Governance Statement and to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control required by Regulation 3. CIPFA/SOLACE issued new guidance for 2016/7 entitled "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016" and at its meeting on 15 June 2017 Audit Committee reviewed this, and recommended some areas for improvement. This report relates to the recommendation which is specific to Standards Committee.

Executive Summary

2. The report recommends a new annual report to Council setting out the Committee's work over the past year, to strengthen overall governance arrangements.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities – Implications

3. The proposed decision supports the Council's overall governance arrangements, specifically the Local Code of Governance.

Background and Issues

4. The Accounts and Audit Regulations require preparation of an Annual Governance Statement, which is underpinned by a Local Code of Governance setting out Wycombe District Council's corporate governance arrangements, and during the course of work carried out by the Audit Committee on 15 June 2017 to

comply with these requirements, in accordance with CIPFA/SOLACE guidance (Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016), the Council's Local Code of Governance has been approved.

5. An Action Plan was also drawn up following review of the Council's governance arrangements for 2016/7. The Action Plan set out a number of areas for proposed improvement. One of these suggested areas is the introduction of an Annual Report from Standards Committee to full Council, outlining the work programme of the Standards Committee in the past year, including training provided, the number of member conduct complaint referrals and outcomes, and any outside assurance in relation to operational processes.
6. Standards Committee will be aware that whilst all of these areas are already covered in the work which it carries out, and the minutes of each meeting are reported to full Council, it has not so far prepared an annual report on its work. Doing so would mean that full Council would have the benefit of a composite annual overview of the Committee's work.

Options

7. It is not obligatory to have an annual report to full Council. However, for the reasons outline above, it would help to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements.

Conclusions

8. It is recommended that Standards Committee prepares and approves an annual report to full Council, to be approved by Standards Committee each Spring.

Next Steps

9. Full Council will in future receive annual reports from Standards Committee.

Background Papers

None.