

DECISION-MAKER:	COUNCIL
SUBJECT:	ANNUAL STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE BUSINESS REVIEW
DATE OF DECISION:	16 MAY 2012
REPORT OF:	CHAIR OF STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
Not applicable.	

BRIEF SUMMARY

This report gives an overview of the work of the Standards and Governance Committee and decisions made at its meetings from May 2011 to April 2012.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (i) That the report be noted.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This report is presented in accordance with the agreed recommendations arising from the 2009 Ethical Governance Review.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

2. The 2011/12 municipal year has been an unremarkable one in terms of the regular business of the Standards and Governance Committee. We received, considered and approved reports in respect of the Council's governance procedures, accounts, audit findings and complaints statistics, and while the Council's performance in those fields inevitably fluctuates we found no particular cause for concern in those fluctuations. Rather, the Council performs generally well in comparison to its comparator authorities. That said, there is room always for improvement and never for complacency.
3. Three matters came to the Committee's attention during the year which stood out from its routine work: implementation of the Constitution regarding the role of the Mayor; the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP); and the Localism Act, particularly inasmuch as it affects the Committee itself and the Members' Code of Conduct.
4. Regarding the role of the Mayor, we noted that some events which were of a ceremonial nature had been attended by the Leader when the Constitution would indicate that the Mayor should be the one to attend. We asked the Solicitor to the Council to remind all Departments of the provisions of the Constitution so as to give proper respect to the office of Mayor and indeed to the Constitution itself.
5. We felt, and advised the Council, that some of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel would discourage people from standing for election (or co-option) and could thereby damage the democratic process in our community. In the event, the Council needed no encouragement to reject the IRP's report.

6. The Localism Act, among many other provisions, signals significant changes in the governance regime for local authorities, including the role and composition of standards committees. Once those provisions take effect, on 1 July 2012, Independent Members will not have a vote. It is a matter of opinion whether that strengthens or weakens democratic accountability, given that we are not elected, but it does tend to reduce the transparency of the Council's governance arrangements, and the consensus in the Committee is that it is a regrettable development. The Committee was, and remains, concerned at the proposal to abandon a national approach to a code of conduct for members, but it seems likely that collaboration between councils and the Local Government Association will lead to councils using a common model code, or possibly one of two model codes, and the existing national code will in effect be replaced by something which is not much different. Discussions continue about the role, if any, of co-opted Independent Members in the new arrangements.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

7. Not applicable.

Property/Other

8. Not applicable.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory Power to undertake the proposals in the report:

9. Section 111 Local Government Act 1972 and Local Government Act 2000.

Other Legal Implications:

10. Not applicable.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

11. None.

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms and can be accessed on-line

Appendices

1.	None.
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Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None.
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Integrated Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject/recommendations in the report require an Integrated Impact Assessment to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	None.	
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Integrated Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at: Not applicable

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	None.
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