

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Standards Committee
Date: 23 September 2020
Report for: Information
Report of: Corporate Director of Governance & Community Strategy

Report Title

Update on the implementation of the Committee on Standards in Public Life's (CSPL) 15 areas of best practice following the impact of COVID 19.

Summary

The Committee on Standards in Public Life completed an in-depth review of ethical Standards within local authorities in 2018. The review focused upon how Local Authorities had responded to the changes made by the Localism Act 2011. The final report was published in January 2019 and contained 15 areas of best practice which Local Authorities were to implement. A report detailing the Council's progress was presented to the Committee on the 4th March 2020. This report provides an update to the Committee on the Council's progress in implementing the 15 areas of best practices following the impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic as shown in the updated action plan (Appendix 1).

Recommendations

The Standards Committee are asked to;

- a) To note the report
- b) To note the updated action plan for implementation of the areas of best practice following the impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None

Implications

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Council's Constitution, Members' Code of Conduct and related policies and procedures.
Financial	None
Legal Implications:	None
Equality/Diversity Implications	None
Sustainability Implications	None
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	None
Risk Management Implications	Revision of the Council's Code of Conduct and related policies and procedures in line with the areas of best practice of the CSPL will reduce the risk of legal action being taken against the Council.
Health and Safety Implications	None

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life conducted a review of Local Government Ethical Standards in 2018. As part of the review all Local Authorities and Councillors were asked to complete a consultation document.
- 1.2 The feedback from all Local Authorities and Councillors was taken and the subsequent report was published in January 2019. The report contained 15 areas of best practice which all Councils were to enact by June 2020. The Standards Committee were informed at their meeting in March 2019 that Trafford already met a number of these areas of best practice. An action plan laying out how the Council would meet all 15 areas of best practice by June 2020 was presented to the Committee in January 2020.
- 1.3 In March 2020 eight documents were submitted to the Standards Committee. The Committee suggested a number of amendments prior to agreeing the documents. Of the eight documents four required sign off by full Council prior to them being implemented.

2.0 Impact of COVID 19.

- 2.1 Following the Standards Committee meeting 4th March the Country was hit by the outbreak of the COVID 19 Pandemic. In the following months the vast majority of the Council's meetings were cancelled which has resulted in a delay to the documents agreed by the Committee being submitted to Council (best practice 1,2,3,6, and 9) and the Accounts and Audit Committee (Best Practice 5).
- 2.2 In response to the COVID 19 pandemic the Government moved back the deadline for Local Authorities to complete their Annual Governance Statements (Best Practice 14). Trafford made the decision to push back the publishing of

the draft AGS by a month in line with the revised publishing of the Council's Accounts. Due to the tight timescale the section on separate bodies set up by the Council was left out of the draft AGS but is scheduled to be added into the final version which will be submitted to the Accounts and Audit Committee on the 28th October 2020 prior to being published 1st November 2020.

- 2.3 The two areas of best practice which related to Parish Councils (Best Practice 11 and 12) are the areas of most concern. Prior to COVID 19 it was planned for Officers to visit each of the four Trafford Parish Councils in April to discuss their codes of conduct and the support that they require from the Council. Since the outbreak of COVID 19 these meetings have not been rescheduled. It has been proposed that this be picked up alongside the Council's consultation with Parish Council's as part of the Boundary Review work programme.

3.0 Committee on Standards in Public Life letter to Local Authorities

- 3.1 In July the Committee on Standards in Public Life sent out a letter to all local authorities in relation to the completion of the 15 areas of best practice. The letter explained that due to the impact of COVID 19 the Committee on Standards in Public Life did not expect an immediate response from local authorities on the implementation of the areas of best practice but that they would be in contact in Autumn 2020 to ask about the progress that had been made.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Standards Committee are asked to;
- a) To note the report
 - b) To note the updated action plan for implementation of the areas of best practice following the impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic.