

**30. Committee on Standards in Public Life**

The Democratic Team Leader and Elections Manager:

- (a) Presented the findings of the Committee on Standards in Public Life's review of standards arrangements in local government which comprised 26 recommendations to the Government which it felt would enable councillors to be held account effectively and would enhance the fairness and transparency of the standards process.
- (b) Highlighted the main recommendations that could have an impact on the City of Lincoln Council, if supported and acted upon by the Government.
- (c) Set out considerations for the City of Lincoln Council regarding those recommendations which were considered to represent best practice and did not necessarily require a response from the Government in order for changes to be made locally. These included:
  - use of social media and the potential to introduce a social media policy as part of the Council's member Code of Conduct;
  - the inclusion of bullying and harassment in the member Code of Conduct;
  - a review of the member gifts and hospitality register;
  - a review of the publication of members' home addresses.
- (d) Invited members' questions and comments.

Discussion ensued on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's recommendations contained within the report regarding sanctions and the potential suspension of members. Some concerns were expressed that any panel associated with deciding upon the imposition of sanctions would be political balanced, so it could therefore be perceived that this was unfair. The Committee was reminded that the Council's Independent Person and Monitoring Officer would form an essential part of investigating any alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, ensuring that there was impartiality associated with any case considered by a panel. It was also noted that a further recommendation put forward by the Committee on Standards in Public Life included reference to the right of appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman.

It was RESOLVED

- (1) That the report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life be noted and the Ethics and Engagement Committee awaits the Government's response to the recommendations contained within the report.

- (2) That a review of the member Code of Conduct be undertaken and that its scope be widened to include aspects such as harassment, examples of bullying, links to official capacity and social media use.
- (3) That, as part of a review of the member Code of Conduct, a social media policy for members be developed and appended to the revised member Code of Conduct, together with the Member/Officer Protocol.
- (4) That a review of the Gifts and Hospitality Policy and procedure for members be undertaken.
- (5) That consideration be given to the publication of members' addresses on their Register of Interests.