

Non-Executive Report of the: Standards Advisory Committee Thursday, 1 July 2021	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Divisional Director Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Governance at Council owned bodies	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	(All Wards);

Executive Summary

In 2019 the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) published 15 best practice recommendations on local government ethical standards.

The Standards Advisory Committee has received a number of reports in relation to these recommendations and actions that have been taken.

This report provides an update against Recommendation 14, namely:

“Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement, and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness, and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.”

Recommendations:

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the report.

1. **REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 Following the guidance of the Committee on Standards in Public Life helps ensure strong governance standards at the authority.

2. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 None set out. The Committee could determine not to consider this report but it is not recommended.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life recently published 15 best practice recommendations on local government ethical standards.

3.2 The Standards Advisory Committee has received a number of reports in relation to these recommendations and actions that have been taken.

3.3 This report provides an update against Recommendation 4, namely:

“Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement, and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness, and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.”

3.4 The above can be split into two issues:

- Does the Council report on its ‘separate bodies’ in its Annual Governance Statement?
- Do those bodies abide by the Nolan Principles and publish their agendas, minutes and annual reports?

Annual Governance Statement

3.5 The Annual Governance Statement is reported to the Council’s Audit Committee each year, usually at its July meeting.

3.6 This report includes a section on ‘Council Owned Companies and Partnerships’. The report provides information on the following bodies:

- Tower Hamlets Homes
- Seahorse Homes Limited
- Mulberry Housing Society
- PLACE Ltd (Pan-London Modular Temporary Accommodation)
- Capital Letters (London) Ltd (Pan-London TA procurement hub)

3.7 This content in the annual governance statement, which can be viewed here <https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=388&MId=11577&Ver=4> provides a good level of detail on the Council owned bodies and partnerships and so it is considered that the Council meets the first of the objectives set out in the CSPL.

Publication of Board Papers

3.8 The second half of the question from CSPL related to whether the body operated by the Nolan Principles and in particular whether it published its board agendas and minutes (or otherwise ensured the transparency of its decision making).

- 3.9 Having reviewed the web presence of each organisation it can be reported that Tower Hamlets Homes has a well-maintained website <https://www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk/> containing a lot of information about it as an organisation. It also includes details of its Executive Management Team and the Board including how the public can ask questions of the Board. It also provides agendas and minutes from these meetings. THH would appear to meet the requirements in the CSPL recommendation.
- 3.10 At this point, none of the other listed organisations met this criteria, either having no web presence or else having a website but not including all the suggested information.
- 3.11 The Place and Resources directorates are currently undertaking a governance review of housing companies and all the remaining listed organisations fall within that review. It should also be noted that both Seahorse Homes Limited and Mulberry Housing Society are currently building their websites on which this information could be held.
- 3.12 The above directorates have been made aware of the recommendation of the Committee on Standards in Public Life that board papers and annual reports should be published and they are including this in their review.
- 3.13 It is proposed to retain this issue on the Standards Advisory Committee workplan and to report back to the Committee at a later meeting once there is an available update.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None specific to this update report but the Committee on Standards in Public Life's recommendations are important in ensuring transparency of governance.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 None specific to this update report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendation in the report.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 permits a local authority to do anything an individual may do. The most recent review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, "Local Government Ethical Standards" (January 2019) sets out at number 14 in its list of best practice that: "Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement, and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness, and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place." The seven Nolan principles of conduct are set out in the Localism Act 2011:- selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty and leadership.
- 7.2 The information in this report supports these guiding principles and complies with the best practice set out in the review.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- None

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A