Record of Standards Committee Virtual Meeting

Item: Changes to Governance Arrangements (C2987)	
Purpose of Report:	To present the recommendation to create a Governance and Ethics Committee in
	place of the Governance and Audit Committee and Standards Committee.
Recommended Actions for Full Council:	 To consider amalgamating the Governance and Audit and Standards Committees to form the Governance and Ethics Committee. To delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution (including the terms of reference) to reflect any merging of the Standards Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee if Members are minded to approve it. To delegate authority to the Head of Strategic Support to amend the Timetable of Meetings for 2015/16 if Members are minded to approve the merging of the two Committees.
Comments: Councillor Peter Argyle (12/06)	I have no problems with this merger taking place.
Councillor Rick Jones (14/06)	I am not against this idea. The resulting committee will have a large and active remit, and would be very interesting to be a part of. If it would also be easier to support and administer then there is a bonus.
Parish Councillor Barry Dickens (15/06)	I support this committee amalgamation plan. If I understand correctly such an amalgamation would have little impact on me as a Parish Council Member in that I would continue to just be involved with Standards issues.
Councillor Mollie Lock (22/06)	I thought that at the last meeting of Standards Committee, Members had voted that the Committee should function for possibly a further year to allow new District and Parish Councillors to fully

understand what is involved. It is not reasonable for anyone new to the Committee to express an informed view.
I object to this proposal. The original concept of this Standards Committee was that it was a politically balanced committee with additional independent members as well as parish/town council members which made it a non-partisan body to determine breaches of the code of conduct wherever these occurred within the district and regardless of the political colour of the subject member. The Standards Committee structure has been modified but has still had that sense of independence to determine breaches of the Code and make recommendations to amend policy whenever needed. I suspect that if it is incorporated into a Governance and Ethics Committee it will be treated in the same way as other WBC committees. No-one has indicated yet whether the independent and parish/town council members will be retained in the future and if so, will it have to become a Working Group or Task Group? I also cannot see any synergy with the Governance and Audit Committee which makes me believe the real reason for combining the two committees is for administrative and cost reasons. While I would support the saving of resources in most cases, this is not the appropriate committee for merging.
Supportive of the comments of Councillor Edwards. He felt it was important to retain existing levels of independence on the Standards Committee with representation from parish/town councillors. He felt it was important to ensure processes were open and transparent.