

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8th April 2013

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Phil Mould, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Wards affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report sets out the position in relation to key matters which are of relevance to the Standards Committee.
- 1.2 It is proposed that a report of this nature be presented to each meeting of the Committee to ensure that Members are kept updated as to any relevant developments.
- 1.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report will be reported orally at the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

the report of the Monitoring Officer be noted and commented upon as appropriate.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 The Localism Act became law on 15th November 2011. Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 introduced a new standards regime effective from 1st July 2012. The Act places a requirement on authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted (with voting rights) Members of an authority. The Act also requires the authority to have in place arrangements under which allegations that either a district or parish

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8th April 2013

councillor has breached his or her Code of Conduct can be investigated, together with arrangements under which decisions on such allegations can be made. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 were laid before Parliament on 8th June 2012 and also came into force on 1st July.

Service / Operational Implications

Member Complaints

- 3.3 A total of 3 Member to Member complaints were received between the commencement of the new standards regime in July and the end of December 2012.
- 3.4 Two of the complaints were resolved locally and one was referred to the Standards Assessment-Sub-Committee for a decision on whether to investigate. The Sub-Committee determined that the complaint in question should be referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation.

Event for Monitoring Officers and Independent Persons

- 3.5 An event took place at County Hall on 23rd January 2013 which provided an opportunity for Independent Persons and Monitoring Officers throughout the county to meet to discuss the Independent Person role. This was attended by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Member Training

- 3.6 A full programme of Member development opportunities has been offered during the year. The main areas covered were:
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information;
 - Introduction to the new Standards regime and Code of Conduct, as well as the new Standards Committee arrangements. These sessions were well attended by Borough Councillors and one representative of Feckenham Parish Council.
 - Training on regulatory functions including a mock Licensing hearing;
 - Introductions to the work of various committees including Audit and Governance;
 - Questioning and listening skills for overview and scrutiny; and
 - Personal health and safety for councillors.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8th April 2013

- 3.7 The Member Support Steering Group met in February and agreed that 2013/14 should concentrate on the quasi-judicial and regulatory functions. Training will also be arranged on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults. The induction process for new Councillors will be reviewed ready for the Borough Council elections in 2014.

Parish Council matters

- 3.8 A Monitoring Officer Liaison Meeting for the Redditch and Bromsgrove Parish Council Clerks and Executive Officers (EOs) took place on 21st March 2013. This provided an opportunity for Clerks/EOs to raise any queries/issues on matters within the Monitoring Officer's remit, including Standards, Elections and Democratic Services.
- 3.9 The Democratic Services Officer (DSO) for Standards now also acts as the Parish Councils' Liaison Officer. This role serves as a point of contact for the Parish Clerks/EOs who have difficulties in contacting Borough Council Officers, either direct or via the Worcestershire Hub, on any matters. An emailing explaining the position has been sent to all Clerks/EOs.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.10 Any process for managing standards of behaviour for elected and co-opted Councillors must be accessible to the public. It is therefore proposed that an impact assessment will be carried out on the complaints process when established, to ensure accessibility.
- 3.11 In addition, it is proposed that the new arrangements will be publicised on the Council's website and that Officers will work to ensure that members of the public are made aware of the process for making a complaint through all existing community engagement events.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

- Risk of challenge to Council decisions; and
- Risk of complaints about elected Members.

5. APPENDICES

None

**STANDARDS
COMMITTEE**

8th April 2013

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011
Standards report to Full Council on 21st May 2012

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Debbie Parker-Jones
Email: d.parkerjones@redditchandbromsgrove.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881411