

AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

22nd January 2015

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT – STANDARDS REGIME

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder consulted	
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 standards regime matters which are of relevance to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee since the last meeting of the Committee on 25th September 2014.
- 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. Any further updates arising after publication of this report will be reported orally by the Monitoring Officer (MO) at the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

the report of the Monitoring Officer, together with any additional updates provided by the Monitoring Officer at the meeting, 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

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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 since last meeting of the Committee

- 3.3 There have been no complaints received against members (Borough or Parish) since the last meeting of the Committee on 25th September 2014.

Member Training

- 3.4 At the last meeting it was reported that chairing skills training would be held on 17th September 2014. Unfortunately the training had to be postponed as the trainer was taken ill. The rearranged session took place on 16th December, hosted by Bromsgrove District Council, and was attended by two Borough Councillors alongside Councillors from Worcester City. Feedback on the course and its content was very positive.
- 3.5 A planned training event on media awareness has had to be postponed as Councillors had a number of other commitments. Officers are looking to rearrange this for a more convenient date.
- 3.6 The Member Support Steering Group met in October and has agreed an overall approach to induction following the elections in May. It will meet again shortly to agree the detail and enable dates to be put into diaries at an early stage.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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.

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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

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Complaint papers and various reports to and minutes of meetings of the Standards Committee and Full Council, as detailed in the report.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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