

AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

24th September 2015

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT – STANDARDS REGIME

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher, 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 standards regime matters which are of relevance to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee since the last meeting of the Committee on 2nd July 2015.
- 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 standards matters.
- 1.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report will be reported on orally by Officers 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 Officers 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 ('the Act') 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

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(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 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 2012.

Service / Operational Implications

Member Complaints

- 3.3 At the time of drafting this report no complaints had been received by the Monitoring Officer since the last meeting of the Committee.
- 3.4 The complaint referred to in the Monitoring Officer's July report (against a Borough Councillor relating to declarations of interest) has now been dealt with and closed.

Member Training

- 3.5 A session on Chaining Skills was held in July, hosted by Bromsgrove, which was attended by councillors new to the role and as a refresher for more experienced Members. The feedback was very positive and a repeat event will be held in October.
- 3.6 A number of Members attended a training event on equalities and safeguarding which was run by Council Officers. This was a "short, sharp" briefing which aimed to equip Members with knowledge of the main issues involved in both subjects. For safeguarding, Members have been given information on how to act if they have concerns arising from work in their wards.
- 3.7 Members are being offered planning pre-application training to enable those new to the Council to be involved in this process if they wish, in accordance with the pre-application policy of the Council. All Members are also being offered the opportunity to attend a briefing on finance prior to the start of the budget process, to support their participation in the decisions around this.
- 3.8 Since the last meeting there have been developments in proposals for combined authorities in the West Midlands. A briefing was arranged for all councillors to set out the background and outline the issues for Redditch to enable councillors to be informed for the debate on whether/how the Council wished to take part, at the Council meeting on 21st September.

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- 3.9 A follow-up session on the Code of Conduct and Standards was held earlier in September to enable Members who had been unable to attend the events held immediately after the elections to do so this time.

Feckenham Parish Council Representative and Deputy Representative on the Committee

- 3.10 The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee comprises 9 elected Members (Redditch Borough Councillors), 1 Independent Member (non-voting co-opted) for the purpose of Audit and Governance matters and 1 Feckenham Parish Council Representative (also non-voting co-opted) for Standards matters. A Deputy Parish Representative is also appointed in the event they are required to substitute for the Parish Representative. The Deputy Parish Representative is encouraged to attend meetings of the Committee along with the main representative, in order for them to gain experience of how the Committee works.
- 3.11 Feckenham Parish Councillor Alan Smith, Chair of the Parish Council, has been appointed the new Parish Council Representative on the Committee. Parish Councillor Slade Arthur has been appointed as the Deputy Parish Council Representative. Both have been invited to attend the September meeting and both attended a Code of Conduct and Standards training session conducted by the Monitoring Officer's team in June.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.12 There are no direct implications arising out of this report. Any process for managing standards of behaviour for elected and co-opted councillors must be accessible to the public. Details of the process for Member complaints are available from the Monitoring Officer on request.

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

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6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Confidential complaint papers.

Various reports to, and minutes of, Council and Committee meetings, as detailed in the report.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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