

AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

22nd September 2016

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT – STANDARDS REGIME

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|----------------------------|---|
| 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 7th July 2016.
- 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 with any relevant standards matters.
- 1.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report, including any issues raised by the Feckenham Parish Council Representative, will be reported orally by Officers/the Parish Representative(s) at the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that, subject to Members' comments, the report be noted.

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 2012

Service / Operational Implications

Member Complaints

- 3.3 Since the last meeting of the Committee no complaints have been received by the Monitoring Officer.

Member Training

- 3.4 Recent training events have included data protection and charring skills. Plans are being made for training – available to all councillors – on finance, ready for the budget process in the autumn. Arrangements are also being made for update training on using their i-Pads and for training on personal health and safety.
- 3.5 As detailed in the Calendar of Meetings, an all-Member briefing on the Statement of Accounts is being held by Officers on 8th September 2016, prior to the Committee's consideration of the Statement at the 22nd September 2016 meeting. Whilst the (non-mandatory) briefing is primarily aimed at assisting the members of the Committee, an invite to this is once again being extended to all elected Members who might want to understand more about the accounts and to raise any questions on these.
- 3.6 A county-wide Governance training event to be run by Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, is being hosted by Redditch Borough Council on 11th October 2016. The training is aimed at all Members and will look at what Governance means in practice, together with principles/examples of both good and poor governance. This will provide Members with an opportunity to discuss governance issues with other Members across the county in a non-political environment. The session will end with an overview of audit committees and Members' roles thereon.

Feckenham Parish Council Representative's Updates

- 3.7 Members may recall that there is normally a separate item on the Committee agendas for any relevant standards updates from the Feckenham Parish Council Representative/Deputy Representative. As no updates have needed to be provided by the current Representatives since their having joined the

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Committee, it has been agreed with the Representatives that any future updates will be raised under the Monitoring Officer's (MO's) report. As such, there will no longer be a separate agenda item for Parish Representative updates. This is a sensible approach given that Officers normally highlight any parish-related issues for Members within the MO's report. Members are asked to note that this reporting change will in no way preclude the Parish Representatives from raising any relevant standards issues/updates should they so wish. Any issues/updates can in future either be raised by the Parish Representatives orally at Committee meetings under the MO's report, or with the Monitoring Officer direct at any point in between meetings.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.8 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 Member complaints process are available on the Council's website and 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

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

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

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