

# **AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**2nd February 2017**

## **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 22nd September 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 standards issues raised by the Feckenham Parish Council Representatives, will be reported orally by the Monitoring Officer (MO) / Representatives 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

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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 Since the last meeting of the Committee in September 2016 two complaints have been received. Both complaints were made against Borough Councillors by members of the public.
- 3.4 One complaint related to Member involvement in a neighbour dispute. The MO managed the complaint locally and it was established that the complainant had been acting on information that wasn't factually correct. The MO advised the complainant in detail and the matter was resolved locally.
- 3.5 The second complaint related to a Member's twitter account. The MO spoke to the subject Member's Group Leader in this regard, who arranged for the issue to be resolved. The MO was satisfied that the matter had been resolved locally and the complainant was duly advised of the outcome.

#### **Member Training**

- 3.6 The Grant Thornton Governance training session detailed in the last MO's report took place at Redditch Borough Council on 11th October 2016. A number of councillors attended the session, including councillors from Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire County Council. The training looked at what Governance meant in practice, together with principles/examples of both good and poor governance.
- 3.7 A short course on finance for councillors was held on 3rd November 2016 and was attended by 11 councillors. The purpose of this event was to raise Members' awareness and help build confidence when considering budget information and making financial decisions. It covered the following aspects:
  - To outline the scale of reductions in government spending on local government and the reasons for this;
  - To explain where the money comes from to fund the Council and what it is spent on;

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- To explore the Council's current and future financial position;
- To explain the Council's quarterly budget monitoring reports; and
- To consider how those budget monitoring reports might be improved.

Feedback about the course has been very positive.

- 3.8 Plans for future training include Personal Health and Safety for Councillors and Social Media.

## **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.9 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 meetings, as detailed in the report.

Confidential complaint correspondence.

## **AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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