

**AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

26th November 2020

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor David Thain (for Governance)
Portfolio Holder consulted	No
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

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 update provided at the meeting of the Committee in July 2020.
- 1.2 It has been 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 Representative(s), will be reported by the Monitoring Officer (MO) at the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATION

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 ('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 (with voting rights) Members of an authority. The Act also requires the

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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 The Monitoring Officer received a number of complaints relating to a single incident at District level. She has, in consultation with the Leader of both Groups and in accordance with the process for managing complaints resolved matters locally

The New Normal

- 3.4 Meetings continue to be held remotely in order to meet the requirements of the new legislation with all public meetings being live streamed to the Council's You Tube channel, and a link provided on the Council's website to access these. This allows the public to continue to see that Council business is carrying on and that decisions are being made in an appropriate manner.
- 3.5 All committees are now being held remotely, including the full Council meetings and the Municipal Calendar for 2020/21 continues, with a number of additional Planning Committee meetings been added to this.
- 3.6 The legislation which was put in place at the beginning of lockdown remains in place until 7th May 2021, although it is anticipated that this will be reviewed prior to that date and remote meetings will continue well in to 2021.
- 3.7 In light of the need to work remotely new IT equipment has been rolled out to all Members in order for this to be achieved more easily and efficiently for all concerned. Training on the new equipment was provided in various formats, including face to face (with all social distancing guidelines being adhered to), online and for those Members with a good knowledge of IT the equipment was provided together with an instruction sheet and telephone number for them to ring should they have any issues.
- 3.8 The Council is working towards moving over to Microsoft Teams as the preferred platform for holding remote meetings.

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- 3.9 The Constitutional Review Working Party continues to meet and at its last meeting discussed delegations in respect of Section 106 monies and delegations to Officers for some planning applications being considered at Planning Committee. A report was presented on the findings of the Working Party at the Council meeting held on 16th November 2020, with full details of this meeting available on the Council's website.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.10 There are no direct implications arising out of this report. Details of the Council's arrangements for managing standards complaints under the Localism Act 2011 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

No appendices

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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