

**Audit, Governance &
Standards Committee
2021**

28th October

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

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| Relevant Portfolio Holder | Councillor David Thain – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling (including Governance) |
| Portfolio Holder Consulted | Yes |
| Relevant Head of Service | Yes |
| Report Author Claire Felton | Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk |
| Wards Affected | N/A |
| Ward Councillor(s) consulted | N/A |
| Relevant Strategic Purpose(s) | An Effective and Sustainable Council |
| Non-Key Decision | |
| If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting. | |

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:-

1) subject to Members' comments, the report be noted

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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 2021.
- 2.2 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.

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- 2.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report, including any relevant standards issues raised by Parish Councils , will be reported on orally by Officers at the meeting.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 ('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 councillor has breached his or her Code of Conduct can be investigated, together with arrangements under which decisions on such allegations can be made.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 It is important to ensure that the Council manages standards regime matters in an appropriate manner. The issues detailed in this report help to ensure that there is an effective and sustainable Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no specific climate change implications

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 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.

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Operational Implications

6.2 Member Complaints

Since the last meeting of the Committee, there have been no new Member complaints received and there are non-ongoing.

The New Normal

- 6.3 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 enabled Councils to hold virtual meetings in 2020 and early 2021. The regulations in respect of remote meetings only applied until 6th May 2021. As a result, from 7th May 2021 elected Members have needed to attend formal Committee meetings in person. These rules do not apply to informal meetings, such as Scrutiny Task Groups or Member training and consequently a lot of informal and private meetings continue to take place remotely.
- 6.4 There were very specific requirements detailed by the Government for meetings held indoors during the national lockdown. Since 19th July 2021, when the last national lockdown ended, the Council has reviewed arrangements for Committee meetings that are being held in person. The Council has adopted a risk assessed based approach, informed by health and safety considerations, which has been determined by the Corporate Management Team following consultation with Group Leaders. The arrangements are being reviewed on a monthly basis.
- 6.5 The Council continues to strongly encourage social distancing at committee meetings, and this informs arrangements when organising meetings. Therefore, meetings held in-person are being organised so that attendees sit at least one metre apart and are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings throughout the meeting unless they are exempt. Where possible, Members and Officers are sat 2 metres apart to

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enable Members to safely remove their face coverings when talking at meetings.

- 6.6 An in-depth all Planning Member training session took place online on 8th September 2021. The session was concerned with 'Decision Making and Material Planning Considerations' and was facilitated by the Development Management Manager and members of the Legal department.
- 6.7 Prior to the meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel on 22nd September 2021, the members of the Panel took part in a training session in order to help scrutinise the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.
- 6.7 The Member Support Steering Group met on 5th October 2021. During this meeting, Members discussed training opportunities, considered an initial draft of the Member Induction programme for 2022 and discussed feedback received from new Members about the induction process in 2021. Further meetings of the group are due to take place later in the municipal year.
- 6.8 The Constitutional Review Working Party continues to meet regularly. Any recommendations arising from meetings of this group will be reported to Council for Members' consideration.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 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.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

No appendices.

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

| Department | Name and Job Title | Date |
|---|---|-------------|
| Portfolio Holder | Councillor David Thain – Portfolio Holder for Governance | 19/10/2021 |
| Lead Director / Head of Service | Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer | 19/10/2021 |
| Financial Services | N/A | |
| Legal Services | Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer | 19/10/2021 |
| Policy Team (if equalities implications apply) | N/A | |
| Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply) | N/A | |