

**Audit, Governance &  
Standards Committee  
2022**

27<sup>th</sup> January

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**MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mike Rouse – 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: <a href="mailto:c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk">c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk</a>
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 October 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.

**Operational Implications**

6.2 Member Complaints

Since the last meeting of the Committee, there have been no new Member complaints received and there are none ongoing.

Model Code of Conduct

- 6.3 Since last reported to members on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021, Monitoring Officers across the county have, as members agreed, been working to agree a version, based on the LGA's Model Code of Conduct, to apply across the county and all levels of local government, which members were keen to achieve. This work is now largely completed and a full report with the proposed new Code for discussion, will be presented to the next meeting of the committee on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

The New Normal

- 6.4 Since 7<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 6.5 Due to the emergence of the Omicron variant in the UK, Plan B guidelines were announced by the Government on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Although Council meetings were not specifically highlighted as part of the Plan B guidelines, a risk-assessed approach has been adopted by the Council in response to this when organising and holding committee meetings. The Council continues to maintain social distancing measures at committee meetings. Therefore, meetings held in-person are being organised so that, wherever possible, attendees sit at least two metres apart. Meeting rooms are fully ventilated throughout the meeting. Following consultation with Group Leaders, it was agreed that all Members should wear a face covering throughout the meeting unless they were exempt. In addition to this, the Council strongly encourages Members to take a lateral flow test on the day of the meeting.

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6.6 The Member Support Steering Group continues to meet regularly and is currently in the process of reviewing the content of the draft Member Induction programme for Councillors due to be elected in May 2022. The next meeting of the group is due to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

6.7 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.

**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mike Rouse – Portfolio Holder for Governance	17/01/2022
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	14/01/2022
Financial Services	N/A	
Legal Services	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic	14/01/2022

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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	Services and Monitoring Officer	
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