

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24 JUNE 2013

REPORT OF MONITORING OFFICER

CODE OF CONDUCT – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the latest position with regard to standards matters including the Code of Conduct, the Registration of Disclosable Interests and Other Interests and any complaints dealt with under the new system.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The update on the position of standards matters including Parishes' Codes of Conduct, Registration of Disclosable Interests etc and complaints dealt with under the new system is noted.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

3.1 Registration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Interests

Members are continuing to update their original forms as new issues are raised or changes in circumstances.

We are continuing to liaise with six parish councils regarding their Registration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Interest Forms. Two are making progress and the others will be contacted again to ascertain if they require further support.

3.2 Code of Conduct – Parish Councils

Liaison with two parishes is ongoing for them to adopt a new Code of Conduct which includes the requirements of the Localism Act. Some Parish Councils meet only a few times per year, therefore progress with the adoption process for those parishes is slow.

3.3 Complaints Process

The new Complaints Process has been applied to 9 complaints so far and 3 have been completed at informal resolution stage without the need to be referred to the Governance Committee. 4 others have been considered by the Governance Committee; 1 resulted in other action and the outcome of the other 3, was no action.

There are 2 complaints in process.

3.4 Committee Training

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer held a training session on the Code of Conduct and Complaints Process for the Committee on 16 May 2013 and 6 Members attended. Further training is being arranged to support the Committee in dealing with complaints. An overview training session on the Code of Conduct and complaints process for all Councillors and Parish Councils is being sourced externally by the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

3.5 Independent Persons and Parish Representatives

The independent persons have been consulted on three cases and provided a view on these cases. Regular update meetings are taking place with the Monitoring Officer.

The Monitoring Officer has met with two of our three Parish Representatives and there has been correspondence with the third Parish Representative to bring him up to date with the discussions. These meetings focussed on the complaints process and how it relates to the Code of Conduct and the Registration of Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Other Interests. Members will recall that Parish Co-optees (non-voting) are to be part of the Governance Committee when Parish Councillor complaints are considered.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Strong Corporate Governance is important in order to ensure high standards of conduct are maintained.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The implementation of the new requirements is impacting on Democratic Services resources with particular regard to the Parish requirements.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 Of particular note in the new Localism Act is the change making the non-registration of a disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days a criminal offense.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no specific community safety implications in this report.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 All equalities implications have been considered.

9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 The impact of the changes and implementation to meet the requirements of the Localism Act will need to be managed to minimise any risk to the Council's reputation or otherwise.

10.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 Publishing Registration of Disclosable Interest forms and information on the Councillor Complaints process to the website encourages paper free access to information helps to meet the Council's green targets.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 There has been consultation with Parish Councils on options for meeting the new legislation.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All indirectly.

Contact Officer: Angela Tebbutt, Monitoring Officer

Date: June 2013

Appendices: None

Background Papers: Localism Act 2011
Minutes of Council Meeting held on 18 July 2012
Previous Minutes of Standards Committee
Previous Minutes of Governance Committee

Reference: Cttees, Council & Sub-Cttees/Governance/2013-14/240613/Code of Conduct – Update on Progress