

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 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 Pecuniary 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 Pecuniary 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.

Work with the parishes is ongoing to ensure all Parish Councillors' Registration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Interest Forms are completed and on the website. Since the last meeting, one more Parish Council has completed this task and we are in contact with three others offering support as required.

###### 3.2 Code of Conduct

The Council's Code of Conduct was updated slightly by the Full Council on 17 July 2013.

Liaison with two parishes is still ongoing to let us know which Code of Conduct has been adopted which meets 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 current Complaints Process has been applied to 10 complaints so far and 3 have been completed at informal resolution stage without the need to be referred to the Governance Committee. 6 others have been considered by the Governance Committee; 1 has resulted in being referred for investigation, 1 resulted in other action and the outcome of the other 4 was no action.

There is 1 complaint in the early stages of the process.

In response to Members' concern as to how the complaint process works, there is a separate report at this meeting which offers the opportunity to review the existing Complaints Process.

### 3.4 Committee Training

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer held a second training session in July 2013 on the Code of Conduct and Complaints Process for Members who were not able to attend the 16 May 2013 session and 1 Member 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 6 complaints and provided a view on these cases. Regular update meetings are taking place with the Monitoring Officer.

So far the three Parish Representatives have not been involved in any complaints as the Parish Councillor cases received have not reached the stage where their involvement is required. Parish Representatives would be co-opted when a complaint is referred to the Governance Committee.

## 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 Democracy related resources with particular regard to the Parish requirements.

## 6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

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

## 7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

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

## 8.0 **EQUALITIES**

- 8.1 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 Pecuniary 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.

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Contact Officer: Angela Tebbutt, Monitoring Officer

Date: September 2013

Appendices: None

Background Papers: Localism Act 2011  
Minutes of Council Meeting held on 18 July 2012  
Minutes of Council Meeting held on 17 July 2013  
Previous Minutes of Standards Committee  
Previous Minutes of Governance Committee

Reference: Cttees, Council & Sub-Cttees/Governance/2013-14/240913/Code of Conduct – Update on Progress