

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE**

17th September 2015

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder consulted	Yes
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, Standards and Governance Committee since the last meeting of the Committee on 16th July 2015.
- 1.2 It is proposed that a report of this nature be presented to each meeting of the Committee to ensure that Members are kept updated as to any relevant standards matters.
- 1.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report will be reported on orally by Officers at the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the report and comment on any aspects of this, as appropriate.

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 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

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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 At the time of drafting this report no complaints had been received by the Monitoring Officer since the last meeting of the Committee.

Member training

- 3.4 A session on Chairing Skills was held in July which was attended by councillors new to the role and as a refresher for more experienced Members. The feedback was very positive and a repeat event will be held in October.
- 3.5 Members are being offered planning pre-application training to enable those new to the Council to be involved in this process if they wish, in accordance with the pre-application policy of the Council. All Members are also being offered the opportunity to attend a briefing on finance prior to the start of the budget process, to support their participation in the decisions around this.
- 3.6 Since the last meeting there have been developments in proposals for combined authorities in the West Midlands. A briefing has been arranged for all councillors to set out the background and outline the issues for Bromsgrove, to enable councillors to be informed for the debate on whether/how the Council wishes to take part, due at the Council meeting later in September.
- 3.7 A follow-up session on the Code of Conduct and Standards was held earlier in September, to enable Members who had been unable to attend the events held immediately after the elections to do so this time.

Deputy Parish Councils' Representative on the Committee

- 3.8 Further to the appointment at the Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC) meeting on 10th June of Parish Councillors Chris Scurrell and John Ellis as the two Parish Councils' Representatives on the Committee, the CALC meeting on 9th September will look to appoint a Deputy Parish Councils' Representative who may act as substitute for either of the parish representatives. As the Monitoring Officer's report is being printed prior to the CALC meeting, Officers will provide an oral update on the outcome of this at the meeting.

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Review of Arrangements for Standards Hearings

- 3.9 As detailed in the Review of the Constitution report which was considered by full Council on 17th June 2015, as a consequence of the merging of the standards responsibilities into the new Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, the new Committee is due to review the arrangements for standards hearings. A report on this is now anticipated for the 10th December 2015 meeting. This report will also look at the establishment of Standards Hearings Sub-Committees.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.10 There are no direct implications arising out of this report. Details of the Council's process for Member complaints are available 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

None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Various reports to, and minutes of, Council and Committee meetings, as detailed in the report.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Debbie Parker-Jones
Email: d.parkerjones@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881411