

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 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 17th September 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 one complaint had been received by the Monitoring Officer since the last meeting of the Committee. This was from a member of the public and related to declarations of interest. The complaint was investigated by the Monitoring Officer and no breach of the Members' Code of Conduct was established.

Member training

- 3.4 A further session on Chairing Skills was held in October. Whilst the attendance was a little disappointing, the feedback continued to be positive and a further session will be arranged in the new municipal year.
- 3.5 As previously reported, a planning pre-application session took place in September in order to enable those new to the Council to be involved in this process if they wished, in accordance with the pre-application policy of the Council. This was well attended and a further session is planned for early in the New Year.
- 3.6 Data Protection training has also taken place. This session provided a brief summary of Members' responsibilities under data protection law and provided details on how information could be shared legally and carefully whilst ensuring that data protection was not a barrier to helping people.
- 3.7 Members have also received an update in respect of the West Midlands Combined Authority outlining the issues specific to Bromsgrove, and a briefing about the Worcestershire Devolution proposals. Members will continue to receive updates where necessary on both these issues.

Dispensations – Budget and Council Tax Setting

- 3.8 The County Monitoring Officers' Group have recently agreed that it is no longer necessary for Members to seek dispensations for the budget or Council Tax setting. As such, the general dispensations previously granted to by the Committee for these areas are no longer required.

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Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.9 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

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