

# **AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015

## **REVIEW OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR STANDARDS HEARINGS**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service for Overview and Scrutiny	Claire Felton – Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Wards Affected	All wards
Non-Key Decision	

### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 To review the arrangements for Standards Hearings following the amalgamation of the Audit Board with the Standards Committee in June 2015 in order to determine suitable arrangements for the future.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Members are requested to:**

- (a) consider the options for Standards Hearings as detailed in Appendix 1 and to identify suitable arrangements to be introduced in future; and**
- (b) consider the options for membership appointments to any future Standards Hearings as detailed in Appendix 2 and to identify suitable arrangements to be introduced in future.**

### **3. KEY ISSUES**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 The Council was asked to consider proposed changes to the constitution arising from recommendations of the Constitution Working Group at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The recommendations included the work of the standards Committee being merged with that of the Audit Board with immediate effect and being renamed the Audit, standards and Governance Committee.
- 3.2 As highlighted in the report presented to Council in June 2015 it was recommended that the new Committee should review the arrangements for Standards Hearings at an early meeting. This report provides Members with an opportunity to carry out that review.
- 3.3 Arrangements for dealing with Standards – the Code of Conduct and Complaints about Parish and District Councillors – changed in 2012 under the Localism Act. The emphasis is now placed on early resolution of issues and fewer formal hearings being held. Therefore it

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is not anticipated that the Standards Hearings referred to in this report would meet on a regular basis.

**Financial Implications**

- 3.4 There are limited financial implications to this report. The main expenditure would be in respect of officer time and Members' travelling expenses when conducting a Standards Hearing. It should be noted that this expenditure would have been required regardless of whether the Committee merger had taken place in order to deal with any complaints against district or Parish Councillors.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.5 The Council is required by law to maintain a constitution which sets out how the Council sets decisions and meets the appropriate legal requirements. By agreeing a particular Standards Hearing procedure the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee will be contributing towards meeting these legal requirements..

**Service/Operation Implications**

- 3.6 There are no direct service or operational implications to this report.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.7 There are no specific customer or equality implications arising from this report.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

There is a risk that if the Committee does not identify suitable Standards Hearing arrangements the council could be placed open to challenge for not complying with legal requirements as detailed in this report.

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Standards Hearing Options  
Appendix 2 – Standards Hearing Membership Options

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers.

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