

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

8th December 2016

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 15th September 2016.
- 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 with any relevant standards matters.
- 1.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report, including any relevant standards issues raised by the Parish Councils' Representative(s), will be reported on orally by Officers/the Parish Representative(s) at the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That, subject to Members' comments, the report be noted.

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

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

8th December 2016

allegations can be made. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary 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 last meeting the Monitoring Officer reported on a Member to Member (both district councillors) complaint that had been received and which was in its early stages. At the time of drafting this report the complaint was still with Group Leaders for resolution.
- 3.4 Since the September meeting one complaint regarding a Member's involvement in a planning decision has been received. The complaint, which was made by a member of the public, was managed locally. It was found that the applicant was not happy with the Planning Committee's decision and that the Member's involvement was appropriate and that they had operated entirely within the rules.
- 3.5 A general standards issue (non-complaint related) has also arisen since the last meeting as a result of an interest that was not correctly disclosed. The Monitoring Officer spoke to the Member concerned and the relevant Group Leader. The Member was entirely co-operative and the matter was resolved locally. The Independent Person for Standards was advised and confirmed that he was in agreement with the resolution proposed in the circumstances.

Member training

- 3.6 Training has been held on data protection as part of repeat opportunities for Members to understand the legal background and their role in this.
- 3.7 The Grant Thornton Governance training session detailed in the last Monitoring Officer's report also took place at Redditch Borough Council in October and was attended by delegates from a number of neighbouring authorities, including Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire County Council.
- 3.8 At the last meeting Members discussed the Grant Thornton training event and questioned whether it might be more appropriate for this training to be delivered by an independent body with no links to the Council. The Member Development Steering Group was therefore asked to investigate governance training arrangements at other local authorities and with the Local Government Association. The Monitoring Officer raised this issue at

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

8th December 2016

the last meeting of the Member Development Steering Group and it was agreed to look to source a different provider the next time any such training was due to be delivered.

3.9 The Member Development Steering Group has also agreed that future training opportunities include:

- personal health and safety for Councillors;
- snapshot interactive briefing sessions about housing; and
- finance training.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.10 There are no direct implications arising out of this report. Details of the Council's arrangements for managing standards complaints under the Localism Act 2011 are available on the Council's website and 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.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Debbie Parker-Jones (Democratic Services Officer)
Email: d.parkerjones@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881411