

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

24th November 2020

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro (for Governance)
Portfolio Holder consulted	No
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 report which was presented at the meeting of the Committee in July 2020.
- 1.2 It has been 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 Committee is asked to RESOLVE that 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 Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 ('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

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councillor has breached his or her Code of Conduct can be investigated, together with arrangements under which decisions on such allegations can be made.

Service / Operational Implications

Member Complaints

- 3.3 The Monitoring Officer has been dealing with various Parish complaints largely in respect of process and is liaising with the Clerks of the Parish Councils concerned to provide advice and support.
- 3.4 There has been one Parish complaint which has been received with regard to matters discussed at a Parish Planning sub committee. The monitoring Officer is currently obtaining further detail to establish if the issues touch the Code and will report further at the next meeting.

The New Normal

- 3.5 Meetings continue to be held remotely in order to meet the requirements of the new legislation with all public meetings being live streamed to the Council's You Tube channel, and a link provided on the Council's website to access these. This allows the public to continue to see that Council business is carrying on and that decisions are being made in an appropriate manner.
- 3.6 All committees are now being held remotely, including the full Council meetings and the Municipal Calendar for 2020/21 continues, with a number of additional Planning Committee meetings been added to this.
- 3.7 The legislation which was put in place at the beginning of lockdown remains in place until 7th May 2021, although it is anticipated that this will be reviewed prior to that date and remote meetings will continue well in to 2021.
- 3.8 In light of the need to work remotely new IT equipment has been rolled out to all Members in order for this to be achieved more easily and efficiently for all concerned. Training on the new equipment was provided in various formats, including face to face (with all social distancing guidelines being adhered to), online and for those Members with a good knowledge of IT the equipment was provided together with an instruction sheet and telephone number for them to ring should they have any issues.

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- 3.9 The Council is working towards moving over to Microsoft Teams as the preferred platform for holding remote meetings.
- 3.10 The Constitution Review Working Group continues to meet and at its last meeting discussed delegations in respect of Section 106 monies, public speaking at Planning Committee for TPOs and the Council Procedure Rules in relation to Notices of Motion. The Working Group have asked for further information in respect of the TPO item and their findings will be reported back in due course. A report will be presented at the Council meeting to be held on 2nd December in respect of the other areas discussed.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 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

No appendices

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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