

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Audit, Standards & Governance Committee 2022

2nd February

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Geoff Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling (including Governance)	
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes	
Relevant Head of Service		Yes	
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk		
Wards Affected		N/A	
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		An Effective and Sustainable Council	
Non-Key Decision			
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.			

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

**The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee is asked to
RESOLVE that:-**

1) subject to Members' comments, the report be noted

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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 update provided at the meeting of the Committee in October 2021.
- 2.2 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.

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- 2.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report, including any relevant standards issues raised by Parish Councils, will be reported verbally by Officers at the meeting.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 It is important to ensure that the Council manages standards regime matters in an appropriate manner. The issues detailed in this report help to ensure that there is an effective and sustainable Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no specific climate change implications

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 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.

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Operational Implications

6.2 Member Complaints

Since the last meeting of the Committee, a number of complaints have been received in respect of the same issue and consideration of this issue is ongoing.

New Model Code of Conduct

6.3 Since last reported to Members on 22nd July 2021 Monitoring Officers across the county have, as members agreed, been working to agree a version, based on the LGA's Model Code of Conduct, to apply across the county and all levels of local government, which Members were keen to achieve. This work is now largely completed and a full report with the proposed new Code for discussion, will be presented to the next meeting of the committee on 10th March 2022.

The New Normal

6.4 Since 7th May 2021, elected Members have needed to attend formal Committee meetings in person. These rules do not apply to informal meetings, such as Scrutiny Task Groups or Member training and consequently a lot of informal and private meetings continue to take place remotely.

6.5 Due to the emergence of the Omicron variant in the UK, Plan B guidelines were announced by the Government on 8th December 2021. Although Council meetings were not specifically highlighted as part of the Plan B guidelines, a risk-assessed approach has been adopted by the Council in response to this when organising and holding committee meetings. The Council continues to maintain social distancing measures at committee meetings. Therefore, meetings held in-person are being organised so that, wherever possible, attendees sit at least two metres apart. Meeting rooms are fully ventilated with windows kept open throughout the meeting, except when proceedings enter into exempt session. For this reason, Members are strongly encouraged to wear warm clothing when attending committee meetings held during the winter months. Following consultation with Group Leaders, it was

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agreed that all Members should wear a face covering throughout the meeting unless they were exempt. In addition to this, the Council strongly encourages Members to take a lateral flow test on the day of the meeting.

- 6.6 The Member Development Steering Group met on 12th January 2022. During this meeting, the group discussed and agreed that additional training should be delivered in 2022 in respect of Civil Leadership in Emergencies and Carbon Literacy training, the latter session having been recommended at a recent meeting of the Climate Change Working Group. The group also agreed that Safeguarding training should be mandatory, with Members required to attend at least one safeguarding training session during their term of office. At the request of the group, the safeguarding and Civil Leadership in Emergencies training will both be included in the Member Induction pack in 2023.
- 6.7 During the meeting of the Member Development Steering Group on 12th January 2022, there was also a discussion of training and support in respect of Members' safety. This item was considered to be timely following the tragic death of Sir David Amess MP. The group agreed that training should be offered to Members in respect of lone working and keeping safe and dates for this training will be communicated to Members in due course. The group also discussed the potential for Members to register with the Lifeline service as lone workers, to help ensure the safety of Members when fulfilling their role when meeting with local stakeholders and constituents.
- 6.8 The Constitution Review Working Group continues to meet regularly. Any recommendations arising from meetings of this group will be reported to Council for Members' consideration.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 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.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

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No appendices.

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Governance	18/01/2022
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	14/01/2022
Financial Services	N/A	
Legal Services	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	14/01/2022