

**Audit, Standards &
Governance Committee
2023**

17th July

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Charles Hotham
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 ordinary meeting of the Committee in March 2023.
- 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.
- 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.

Operational Implications

Member Complaints

- 6.2 Since the last meeting of the Committee, the Monitoring Officer has received a Parish Council complaint which is currently under investigation. There are a number of issues that have arisen in relation to new Member interests and the Monitoring Officer continues to provide advice in this context.
- 6.3 In respect of the complaint reported at the last meeting of the Committee, Members are advised that the subject Member is no longer a Councillor and that, in the circumstances, the Monitoring Officer is working with the complainants to ensure a local resolution can be achieved.

Constitution Review

- 6.4 The Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) is responsible for reviewing the content of the Council's constitution. Any proposed changes arising from meetings of the group are reported for the consideration of Council.
- 6.5 The CRWG is due to meet on Wednesday 26th July and has various additional meetings scheduled throughout the year to provide Members with an opportunity to review the content of the Council's constitution.

Member Development

- 6.6 The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) is responsible for co-ordinating Member training, induction and ICT support. The group meets throughout the year and had its first meeting of the municipal year on 14th June 2023. During this meeting, the Member induction process was discussed, including attendance at Member training sessions held to date during the 2023/24 municipal year.

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Member Training

- 6.7 Following the local elections in May 2023, a comprehensive Member training programme has been delivered for both new and returning Members. This programme was organised in accordance with arrangements requested by the MDSG.
- 6.8 Since the last meeting of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, training has been delivered in respect of the following subjects:
- Overview and Scrutiny Board training – 6th June 2023
 - Local Government Finance Training – 12th June (joint with Redditch)
 - Statement of Accounts Briefing – 15th June 2023
 - Licensing Committee Training – 28th June
 - Planning Committee Procedural Briefing – 3rd July 2023
 - Members' Data Protection Training – 4th July 2023 (joint with Redditch).
 - Chairing Skills Training – 5th July 2023 (joint with Redditch)
 - Civility in Public Life including Social Media Training (joint with other Councils in Worcestershire, various dates)
 - Planning Committee Refresher Training – 1st June (a final refresher session is due to be delivered on 11th July 2023).
 - Code of Conduct Training for Parish Clerks and Parish Councillors (7th June, 6th July and 18th July 2023)
- 6.9 During this period, there have been a number of training sessions organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) which are specifically designed for new Councillors. These sessions have been promoted to new Councillors elected in May 2023 and will continue to be promoted on an ongoing basis.
- 6.10 At the latest meeting of the MDSG, Members agreed that additional training opportunities should be offered to Members in the autumn in 2023. This will provide those Members who have missed certain training sessions with an opportunity to receive that training during the municipal year. The dates of all additional training sessions will be

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confirmed in writing with Members once training arrangements have been finalised.

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

No appendices.

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Charles Hotham – Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling	7 th July 2023
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	7 th July 2023
Financial Services	N/A	
Legal Services	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	7 th July 2023