

TITLE OF REPORT: UPDATE ON MONITORING OFFICER WORK PROGRAMME**REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER****1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 A short report to update the Standards Committee on the Monitoring Officer work programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Standards Committee note the content of the report.
- 2.2 That the Committee provide comment on the ongoing work, or ideas for other areas to be considered by the Monitoring Officer in the Civic Year 2013/14.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure good governance within the Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 5.1 None, although clerks of the parish councils will receive copies of this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain matters referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Within its terms of reference the Standards Committee has a function of “to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority”. The Committee will therefore receive update reports from the Monitoring Officer on other policies and procedures that relate to, or assist to govern, Member conduct.

8. ISSUES**Completed Work**

- 8.1 In addition to the work required to implement the new Standards regime (see elsewhere on the agenda) the following work has also been undertaken.
- Planning Code of Good Practice for Councillors – this was updated to reflect the changes to the standards regime and reviewed generally which resulted in some additional sections for clarity. Adopted by Council September 2012.

- Standard template report – this was reviewed generally, including to ensure compliance with legislation. New report was consulted on with senior officers and group leaders. Introduced from 1 January 2013, including training for officers.
- Implementation of new requirements of Access to Information Regulations 2012 – systems were amended to take account of the changes required as of September 2012. MIS and Team Talk bulletins were published and new requirements included as part of report training.
- Gifts and hospitality policies for both members and officers – reviewed in the light of the changes to the standards regime and also generally to ensure clarity. Approved under delegated authority January 2013 and bulletins placed in MIS and Team Talk.
- Training – Members and officers were offered a Localism Update training session on 5 and 24 September 2012. A training session for Parish Councils on Standards was offered, using external trainers, on 18 September 2012.

Ongoing work

8.2 Work is ongoing in a number of key areas:-

- Council Constitution – working with external solicitors (who are involved in a national project with regard to model constitutions) the constitution is being fundamentally reviewed. Senior officers and group leaders have looked at and agreed an alternative structure for the constitution which is now being progressed. An officer team is being set up to consult with and Member workshops will be held when a draft is available. It is anticipated that the Council will be asked to approve the final Constitution at the first Council after Annual Council in 2013/14.
- Member/officer working protocol – this is being reviewed following the changes to the standards regime, an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish group on communication, and generally to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The draft is currently being consulted on with officers and will be brought forward for approval by members in due course.
- Use of social media guidelines for members and officers – this is not intended to be a separate policy (as anything untoward will be dealt with under code of conduct or as a disciplinary matter), but rather guidelines to assist members and officers in how to responsibly use these methods of communication which are growing in importance and popularity.
- Providing advice to District Council members and Parish Councils when requested.
- Providing training as and when required, for example for new councillors or when there is a substantial change in policy or legislation.
- Providing input into Internal Audits as required.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Legal implications will be dealt with when each of the work programme matters are brought back to the Committee.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The external solicitors involved in the Constitution Review are charging £5,000 for their work. This revenue cost is being met out of existing budgets. There are no implications for capital costs within the report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Appropriate policy frameworks help to ensure good governance of the Council and therefore reduce risk of poor practice or unsafe decision making.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None. Implications will be considered in relation to the specific areas of work identified.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 None.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 None. The work outlined within the report is within the Monitoring Officer's workstream.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 None.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 None.

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