

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

20 FEBRUARY 2018

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: STANDARDS MATTERS
REPORT OF THE ACTING MONITORING OFFICER
COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report updates Members of the Committee on standards issues generally, including a Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) consultation on ethical standards.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 notes the content of the report; and
- 2.2 considers the CSPL consultation and provides a response, that will be relayed through the Acting Monitoring Officer.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure good governance within the Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 No consultation has been undertaken.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been 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 matters that relate to, or assist to govern, Member conduct.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Complaints/ issues update

8.1 The following complaints were considered since the last Committee meeting:-

- A complaint that a District Councillor had failed to provide a response to correspondence. The issue was dealt with informally.
- An email was passed on by planning concerning allegations about a District Councillor and a planning matter. The complainant was contacted and provided with complaint contact details. No complaint was received.
- An issue was raised concerning a District Councillor's Declarable Pecuniary Interest (ongoing).

8.2 Following an audit of Declarations (in preparation for these going on the Council's website), it has become apparent that a number of Parish Councillors' Declarations remain outstanding. Further enquiries are being undertaken with Clerks to ensure the Declarations are up to date. If these are not forthcoming then further action will have to be considered.

Member training

8.3 More training is to be provided on the new Councillor Code of Conduct adopted on 23 November 2017 once the Guide has been finalised. This is proposed for a date in April and post implementation (4 May) in May. Members will be kept informed of likely dates through the Member information Service/ by email as appropriate.

Protocol with Hertfordshire Police in relation to DPI offences

8.4 A final copy was signed on behalf of North Hertfordshire and is appended at B.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The terms of reference of the Standards Committee include at paragraph 7.5.1 of the Constitution "to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority".

9.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from the content of this report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no capital or revenue implications arising from the content of this 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 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. There are no direct equalities implications from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 None. The work outlined within the report is within the caseload of the Monitoring Officer and the legal team.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A – Local government ethical standards: stakeholder consultation.
15.2 Appendix B – Protocol with Hertfordshire Constabulary.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 16.1 Jeanette Thompson Acting Corporate Legal Manager and Monitoring Officer
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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 None.