

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 19<sup>TH</sup> November 2013**

**STANDARDS UPDATE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER**

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: LAW, DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

**1. PURPOSE**

To update the Committee on matters relating to the ethical framework since the last Standards Committee meeting in July 2013.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 That the report is noted**

**3. SUMMARY**

3.1 There have been 2 new code of conduct complaints made since the last report to this Committee was prepared, neither have been referred for investigation

**4. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

4.1 Standards Committee – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013

**5. INFORMATION**

5.1 The Monitoring Officer provides updates on the following matters

Complaints

There have been 2 formal complaints received since the last meeting in July, further details are below. The Independent Person, Michael Tebbutt, has attended the Council offices to consult with the Monitoring Officer on whether further investigation of the most complex complaint was needed.

Time Period	Number of complaints	Complaints against Borough Councillors	Complaint against Parish/ Town Councillors	Outcome: No Further Action	Outcome: Further action/ investigation
July 2013 - October 2013	2	0	2 (1 complaint against Cllr who is also a Borough Cllr)	2	0

In addition to these formal complaints the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer have again continued to give advice and information to elected members, members of the public and officers from both the Borough and Parish Councils on Code of Conduct matters.

Following the last meeting of this Committee in July the Chairman, Councillor England, has attended the Legal Services offices on 24<sup>th</sup> July to review recent complaints and the assessments undertaken by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Monitoring Officer's delegation from the Committee.

### Training

A training session for Borough Councillors is scheduled to take place on 20<sup>th</sup> November at Addenbrooke House. So far more than 20 Borough Councillors have confirmed their intention to attend. The training session will be facilitated by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer. Feedback concerning the outcome of the training will be provided to this Committee at the next meeting.

### The 'Independent Person'

Michael Tebbutt, one of the two people appointed as an Independent Person, has been in attendance at the Council offices to consult on complaint assessments (as mentioned above).

A development seminar for the Independent Person from all West Midlands authorities supported by Hoey Ainscough (the independent support for the Independent Person referred to in the report to the last meeting of this Committee) took place on 5<sup>th</sup> November. Telford & Wrekin Council provided the facilities to host this seminar and in return have three invitations to the seminar free of charge. Those places were allocated to the two Independent Persons and the Monitoring

Officer. Again, feedback will be provided to the Committee at the next meeting.

#### Recent update in guidance on Pecuniary Interests

Attached at Appendix 1 is the updated DCLG document entitled “Openness and Transparency on Personal Interests”, which now includes the requirement to specify trade union membership on the register of interests form. This development will be addressed in the training on 20<sup>th</sup> November referred to above.

### **5.2 Equal Opportunities**

No implications

### **5.3 Environmental Impact**

None

### **5.4 Legal Comment**

The statutory requirements for a Code of Conduct and ethical framework for Councillors is set out at part 1, chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Whilst the guidance at Appendix 1 of this report is not a change to the statutory requirements it is advisable for all Councillors to review their register of interests form to ensure that the content on the register of interest forms are compliant with the guidance.

### **5.5 Links with Corporate Priorities**

The work of the Committee contributes to the Council's co-operative values of openness and honesty, fairness and respect and ownership.

### **5.6 Opportunities and Risks**

Risks relating to this particular report are low provided statutory provisions are followed. Opportunities are set out in the report to improve the elected member's (and Independent Persons') knowledge of the Code of Conduct through the training opportunities highlighted.

### **5.7 Financial Implications**

The cost of standards investigations together with the management and administration of the Standards Committee are currently met from within the Legal Services revenue budget. Any variations will be reported as part of the financial monitoring process. No other financial implications arise from this report.

6. **WARD IMPLICATIONS**

No ward specific implications

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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