



REPORT OF:	MONITORING OFFICER
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TO:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
DATE:	3 JULY 2014

AGENDA ITEM NO:	6	WARD(S) AFFECTED:	N/A
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SUBJECT:	STANDARDS UPDATE
RECOMMENDATION:	That the report be noted.
SUMMARY	This report provides an update on various Standards matters.

STATUTORY POWERS

1. The Localism Act 2011 requires Councils to have in place locally focussed processes for regulating the conduct of Members.
2. The Act also imposes a duty on Councils to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members.

MONITORING OFFICER

3. At the Annual meeting on 12 June, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council appointed Michael Graham as the Monitoring Officer. Mr Graham, the Council's Legal Services Manager (shared with Spelthorne Borough Council), had been supporting the Council on an interim basis since December 2013.
4. Mr Graham has appointed Gavin Handford as Deputy Monitoring Officer.

CODE OF CONDUCT – INFORMAL STAGE

5. In relation to allegations of misconduct by Members, the Monitoring Officer was asked to develop procedures and protocols for consideration and approval by the Standards Committee. These were adopted at the meeting of the Committee on 3rd April 2013.
6. The procedure for dealing with complaints involves the following four stages:
 - initial consideration by the Monitoring Officer (Stage 1)
 - local resolution (Stage 2)
 - referral to an Assessment Panel (Stage 3)
 - determination by a Hearings Sub-Committee (Stage 4)
7. The procedure for dealing with complaints involves the following four stages:
8. In advance of the four stages referred to above it is open to any person who is concerned about a Member conduct issue, to contact the Council's Monitoring Officer for informal confidential advice.
9. Given that the majority of Monitoring Officer time is spent on activity which does not lead to a complaint under the adopted procedures, arrangements have been made to discuss with the Group Leaders and the Chairman of the Committee protocols for the management of such issues.

GROUP LEADER MEETINGS

10. Meetings were held with Group Leaders with the aim of establishing a shared understanding of acceptable standards of behavior and some consensus on how complaints would be dealt with at the informal stage. It is acknowledged that Group Leaders can have an important role in resolving many member/member issues before they become formal complaints and that they have a key leadership role in promoting high standards of conduct. Accordingly Group Leaders have agreed to ask their members to raise complaints with them in the first instance and that the Monitoring Officer should direct Councillors to do this as a first step.
11. It has also been agreed that Group Leaders should be informed of (most) complaints about their members to enable them to support the Code and the Standards process and encourage informal resolution.
12. The Group Leader meetings are held on a regular basis and are a very positive development to share experiences, promote high standards and to support the role of the Monitoring Officer.

COMPLAINTS

13. Two complaints were made in in 2013/14, as categorised below.

Category	Number
Failing to treat others with respect	1
Gaining personal advantage	0
Preventing access to information/confidentiality issues	1
Lack of objectivity	0
Complaints by Members	0
Complaints by Officers	0
Complaints by members of the public	1

14. These complaints were investigated by the Monitoring Officer. In each case, no further action was required.
15. The figures reflect the high standards of conduct that Members demonstrate in Reigate & Banstead .

MEMBER TRAINING

16. Code of Conduct Training took place in Autumn 2013, attended by all 51 Councillors. Group Leaders and the Chairman of the Committee have assisted the Monitoring Officer in encouraging attendance. Training is being arranged for the two newly elected Councillors.
17. A wider development programme has also been arranged to support elected Members.

REGISTERABLE INTERESTS

18. Democratic Services are providing 6 monthly reminders to Councillors regarding the importance of keeping their register of interests up to date.

Background papers: None