



REPORT OF:	MONITORING OFFICER
AUTHOR:	Gavin Handford
TELEPHONE:	01737 276027
E-MAIL:	Gavin.Handford@reigate-banstead.gov.uk
TO:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
DATE:	20 JUNE 2016

AGENDA ITEM NO:	6	WARD(S) AFFECTED:	N/A
------------------------	---	--------------------------	-----

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. The Council has appointed Mr Michael Graham as the statutory Monitoring Officer, under Section 5 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1985. Mr Graham is also the Council's Head of Legal Services (shared with Spelthorne Borough Council).
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 Standards Committee adopted procedures and protocols for handling complaints 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. 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.
8. 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

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. The Group Leader meetings are held on a regular basis and provide a constructive forum for discussing cases, promote high standards and supporting the role of the Monitoring Officer.

COMPLAINTS

12. Four complaints were made in in 2015/16. These complaints were reviewed by the Monitoring Officer, who provided a report to the Standards Committee in April 2016. In three cases these were resolved at informal stage. One complaint was formally reviewed, and following consultation with the Independent Person, no further action was taken.

13. The figures reflect the high standards of conduct that Members demonstrate in Reigate & Banstead .

MEMBER TRAINING

14. Code of Conduct Training took place on 19 May 2016 and was attended by 12 councillors, including 4 newly elected Councillors. Previous training was held in Autumn 2013, with all Councillors attending. Training has been offered to all Councillors at Horley Town Council and Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council. Copies of the Code of Conduct and training materials have also been provided.
15. A wider development programme has also been arranged to support elected Members.

REGISTERABLE INTERESTS

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

Background papers: None