



East  
Northamptonshire  
Council

## Joint Standards Complaints Committee – 16 July 2014

### Activity Report of the Monitoring Officer

**Purpose of report:** This regular report provides a brief update on Monitoring Officer activity since the last committee meeting

**Attachment(s)**

Appendix A – Summary of Register of Interest returns by Town and Parish Councils

#### 1.0 Registers of Interest

- 1.1 At the time of writing this report there are 17 outstanding registers of interest for Town and Parish Councillors. We are aware of 18 vacancies in the district. (See Appendix A for details) This is a consistent trend of about 95% compliance, which appears to be well above the national level.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that for newly elected councillors the return of registers within 28 days of taking office is a requirement of the Localism Act. I anticipate therefore a continuing improvement, with 100% compliance after the next elections in 2015.
- 1.3 Members will be aware that the Localism Act also requires Town and Parish Councils to publish their own registers of interest if they have their own website. A recent check revealed that still only seven local councils have complied with this provision despite a reminder from the Monitoring Officer via the Town and Parish Council briefing. There remain 15 websites which still do not display the relevant information. The Monitoring Officer will be contacting the clerks directly to ensure that they are aware of the legal requirement.

#### 2.0 Monitoring Officer enquiries

- 2.1 Since the Committee last met on 29 January 2014 the Monitoring Officer and her Deputies have received 26 enquiries in relation to standards issues. Some of these enquiries have related to later complaints.
- 2.2 One request for dispensations has been received since the last report. This was from Oundle Town Council in respect of their councillors who are also Trustees of the Queen Victoria Hall. The Monitoring Officer was unable to grant the request as such dispensations can only be granted in respect of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI). Such Trusteeship does not fall into any of the categories of DPI. Advice as to declaration of an 'other' interest has been provided instead.

#### 3.0 Complaints

- 3.1 Since the last meeting five new complaints have been received. Initial assessment has been made in all cases with the following outcomes:
  - One complaint was by a councillor in respect of other councillors in the same political party at the same council. It was determined that this should be referred to the relevant political party for resolution in line with Appendix A paragraph 3(f) of the procedure. This assessment has been appealed and an assessment panel is due to meet shortly.
  - Two further complaints involved complaints by councillors against other

councillors at the same councils. Other action was recommended in one case and an investigation in the other. The decision in the first case has been appealed and upheld. The outcome of the investigation will be reported in due course

- Two complaints have been received from members of the public. One was recommended for other action and one for no further action. The former is still within the appeal period.

#### **4.0 Independent Persons**

4.1 In order to continue to provide experience for the Reserve Independent Person, it is proposed that the role of Independent Person and Reserve will be reversed again for the month of August, as happened in 2013. Any new complaints arriving in that month will be referred to Mr Sortwell for comment at initial assessment unless there is any conflict of interest or prior involvement. There are no additional costs arising from this arrangement.

#### **5.0 Equality and diversity issues**

5.1 There are no known negative equality and diversity issues arising from this paper.

#### **6.0 Legal implications**

6.1 This report outlines activities undertaken under local arrangements which reflect the Localism Act 2011 and related regulations.

#### **8.0 Risk management**

8.1 The actions reported reduce the risk of non-compliance with legislation, particularly the duty to promote high standards of conduct by Councillors.

#### **9.0 Financial implications**

9.1 There are no known additional financial implications arising from this report.

#### **10.0 Corporate outcomes**

10.1 The work reported here contributes to the Corporate Outcomes of Effective Management and Strong Community Leadership

#### **11.0 Recommendations**

11.1 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report.

<b>Legal</b>	Power: Localism Act 2011				
	Other considerations: Constitution (Part 9)				
<b>Background Papers:</b>					
<b>Person Originating Report:</b> Sharn Matthews, Monitoring Officer, 01832 742108, smatthews@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
<b>Date:</b>					
<b>CFO</b>		<b>MO</b>		<b>CX</b>	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)

**Registers of Interest Received by the Monitoring Officer \*Updated June 2014**

<b>Council</b>	<b>Number received</b>	<b>Total no of seats</b>	<b>No of vacant seats</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Aldwincle	7	7	0	
Ashton	5	5	0	
Barnwell	7	7	0	
Benefield	7	7	0	
Brigstock	11	11	0	
Bulwick	4	5	1	
Chelveston	7	7	0	
Collyweston	5	7	2	
Deene & Deenethorpe	6	6	0	
Denford	7	7	0	
Duddington	8	8	0	
Easton	11	11	0	
Glaphorn	7	7	0	
Great Addington	6	7	1	
Hargrave	6	7	1	
Harringworth	7	7	0	
Hemington, Luddington & Thurning	9	9	0	
Higham Ferrers	16	16	0	
Irthlingborough	12	12	0	
Islip	8	9	1	
Kings Cliffe	11	11	0	
Lilford cum Wigsthorpe & Thorpe Achurch	5	6	1	
Little Addington	6	7	0	1 form outstanding
Lowick	5	7	2	
Lutton	4	5	1	
Nassington	8	9	0	1 form outstanding
Oundle	12	14	1	1 form outstanding
Pilton, Stoke Doyle & Wadenhoe	7	9	1	1 form outstanding
Polebrook	7	7	0	
Raunds	12	12	0	
Ringstead	8	9	0	1 form outstanding
Rushden	20	21	0	1 form outstanding
Stanwick	7	7	0	
Sudborough	5	5	0	
Thrapston	13	13	0	
Titchmarsh	9	9	0	
Twywell	0	7	2	5 forms outstanding
Warmington	4	9	1	4 forms

				outstanding
Woodford	10	13	1	2 forms outstanding
Woodnewton	5	7	2	
Yarwell	7	7	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>