



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Joint Standards Complaints Committee 21 November 2018

Activity Report of the Monitoring Officer

Purpose of report

This regular report provides a brief update on Monitoring Officer activity since the last meeting.

1.0 Monitoring Officer Enquiries and Complaints

- 1.1 Since the meeting in November 2018 of this Committee there has been no change in the overall level of enquires in relation to declarations of interest and parish council governance questions.
- 1.2 There have been eight new potential complaints, two of which have resulted in formal complaints so far. One of these is against an ENC Councillor and one against a Town and Parish Councillor. Both are now in the Initial Assessment stage.
- 1.3 One complaint remains at the Hearing stage but it is hoped to conclude this before Easter. The outcome of a number of complaints at Easton on the Hill Parish Council in 2017 was an externally conducted review of governance arrangements. This is the subject of a separate report to this Committee.

2.0 Councillor Turnover and Training

- 2.1 As members will be aware, the elections for town and parish councillors that would have taken place in May 2019 have been postponed until May 2020. The date at which any new vacancies will not have to be filled by election is anticipated to be 30 November 2019.
- 2.2 It is anticipated that, although the majority of town and parish councillors will remain in office until that date, there will be a number who planned to leave office in 2019 and who, for personal reasons, will choose to leave before then. To accommodate any new councillors who may be elected in 2019 it is proposed to hold two training events, one in early June 2019 at ENC and one in September at a northern venue.
- 2.3 Assuming that the Secretary of State agrees the creation of two new Unitary Councils for Northamptonshire starting on 1 April 2020, the arrangements for the training of town and parish councillors after the 2020 elections will be made by the Monitoring Officer for the new Unitary Council.

3.0 Dispensations

- 3.1 Following the postponement of the 2019 elections it is also necessary to review the dispensations granted in 2015 as they may require updating to cover the extended term of office. The review has identified that during the last four years only two dispensations were granted by the Monitoring Officer. Extension of one of these dispensations is no longer necessary as the concerned has left office.
- 3.2 The second dispensation relates to Cllr Dave Munday from Stanwick Parish Council, who has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a plot in Stanwick Cemetery, which was managed by Stanwick Parish Council. The original dispensation was granted in 2015 to last until August 2019 to enable his involvement in Parish Council discussions and decisions relating to the management of Stanwick Cemetery unless these discussions involve any changes in rights, responsibilities or charges for the use of the cemetery plot in which he has a disclosable pecuniary interest. It is proposed to renew this

dispensation until June 2020.

- 3.3 It is probable that other councillors may have similar DPIs in relation to town and parish council allotments or cemeteries. Where councillors are aware of these they may have sought dispensations locally under their local Standing Orders. However, it is proposed to issue a reminder to councillors via the Town and Parish Council Bulletin to ensure appropriate dispensations have been sought as necessary.

4.0 Equality and diversity issues

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

5.0 Privacy Impact Implications

- 5.1 There are no privacy implications arising from this report.

6.0 Legal implications

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

7.0 Risk management

- 7.1 The preparation of this report highlights any current areas where there is a risk of non-compliance with legislation such as failure to seek dispensation for DPIs.

8.0 Resource and Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no new financial or resource implications arising from this report.

9.0 Constitutional Implications

- 9.1 There are no constitutional implications arising from this report.

10.0 Implications for our Customers

- 10.1 There are no obvious new implications on customers as a result of this report.

11.0 Corporate outcomes

- 11.1 The work reported here contributes to the Corporate Outcome of Effective Management.




12.0 Recommendation

- 12.1 The Committee is recommended to:

a) note the contents of this report in terms of monitoring of complaint activity;
[Reason: to demonstrate active monitoring of the local ethical standards position

b) agree that a dispensation be granted under S33 (2) (c) of the Localism Act to Cllr D Munday, member of Stanwick Parish Council, until June 2020 to enable his involvement in Parish Council discussions and decisions relating to the management of Stanwick Cemetery unless these discussions involve any changes in rights, responsibilities or charges for the use of the cemetery plot in which he has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

[Reason: to allow this councillor to represent his community on issues of wider community concern in relation to the Parish Council's management of these spaces whilst acknowledging the personal interest he has in part of the space]

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| Legal | Power: | Localism Act 2011 | | | |
| | Other considerations: | | | | |
| Background Papers: | | | | | |
| Person Report: | Originating | Sharn Matthews, Monitoring Officer, ☎ 01832 742108, ✉ smatthews@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk | | | |
| Date: | | | | | |
| CFO 06/03/19 |  | MO 06/03/19 |  | CX 06/03/19 |  |

