



Joint Standards Complaints Committee 17 July 2019

Update on Review of Governance at Easton on the Hill Parish Council.

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the latest position in relation to the progress of the Action Plan arising from the Review of Governance at Easton on the Hill Parish Council.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 As reported at the last meeting, in 2017/18 a number of complaints were received against councillors representing Easton on the Hill Parish Council. The Initial Assessment in all cases recommended that 'other action' be taken in the form of a mediated, independent Governance Review of the Parish Council. This review was subsequently carried out Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd and the findings of the review were presented to the Parish Council in July 2018. The final report was published on the EOHPC website – see: http://www.eastononthehill.com/village-life/ewExternalFiles/HAA_Easton_final%20report.pdf.
- 1.2 The report contained 26 recommendations, including that Easton on the Hill Parish Council should report on its progress in implementing an action plan to address the report's recommendations to the Monitoring Officer of East Northamptonshire Council in 6 months and again in 12 months after the date of that report.
- 1.3 After consideration of the progress made after six months, the Committee commended the progress made to date and reiterated their continued interest and awareness of the review. However it also noted the importance of the Parish Council maintaining progress in meeting its recommendations and asked for an additional 9 month update with further information around who is responsible for taking the proposed actions and when, together with details of the outcomes/changes achieved by the work to date as outlined in the final column of Appendix A of that report. They also noted that they expected that all recommendations will be implemented by the 12 month report. This letter was sent by the Monitoring Officer in early April 2019.

2.0 Latest Position.

- 2.1 Since the last report, two further councillors have resigned, including the former Chairman, and there has been a call for these to be filled via an election rather than co-option. As anticipated at the last meeting, the new Clerk has started work in April. However, in addition, a number of new formal Code of Conduct complaints have been received in relation to Easton on the Hill Parish Councillors. Four of these have completed the Initial Assessment stage and have been referred for investigation. The remaining three are currently are in the initial assessment phase.
- 2.2 The letter written by the Monitoring Officer was not received in time to be discussed at the April meeting. However when it was discussed at the May meeting the deadline for 9 months had already been reached whilst the 12 month report was due this month, i.e. July. It was also considered that implementation of all the recommendations was unachievable in the current situation. The Parish Council has therefore requested an extension to the deadline, in order for the Council to review its position and decide on a plan of action.

3.0 Summary

3.1 It is clear that significant issues remain to be resolved at this council. It should be emphasised that the point of the review and its subsequent recommendations was to provide the Parish Council with a route map to resolving its internal issues and preventing further complaints. That further complaints have been received is therefore of concern as it indicates that some in the council have not fully taken on board the additional training delivered by NCALC or followed the recommendations in the report.

3.2 It is recognised that it is not now possible for the additional 9 month report to be produced amid the current circumstances that now prevail at the Parish Council. However it is important that the Parish Council do take forward the review in a positive way. It is therefore recommended that exceptionally the information requested at 9 months be provided at 12 months and that all the recommendations are implemented by 15 months.

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 Full implementation of the recommendations in the Governance Review should reduce the risk of further complaints of breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct at this Parish Council.

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 for ENC arising from this report.

10.0 Implications for our Customers

10.1 Some of the recommendations are intended to improve the arrangements for the organisation and transparency of council meetings which will benefit local residents wishing to find out more about the council's activities.

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 ask the Monitoring Officer to write to Easton on the Hill Parish Council:

- (a) Recognising that it would not be possible for it to produce the additional 9 month update, as previously requested, and the circumstances prevailing at Easton on the Hill and exceptionally defers the requested governance review response.
- (b) Requesting a report from Easton on the Hill after 12 months (to be received by the end of September) followed by a further updated an final report after 15 months (by the end of December 19).
- (c) Requesting the 12 month report should include the additional information around who is responsible for taking the proposed actions and when, together with details of the outcomes / changes achieved by the work to date previously requested.
- (d) Conveying the expectation that all recommendations will be implemented by the 15 month report in order to show value for money in the investment of tax-payers money in carrying out the governance review.

[Reason: To provide further reassurance on the Parish Council's progress in implementing the recommendations of the Governance Review carried out at this council.]

Legal	Power:	Localism Act 2011			
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:					
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Date: 08/07/19					
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