Purpose of report

Appendices
Appendix 1 - Action Plan for Easton on the Hill Parish Council

1.0 Background

1.1 As reported at previous meetings, 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 by 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 to the Monitoring Officer of East Northamptonshire Council, in 6 months and again in 12 months after the date of that report, on its progress in implementing an action plan to address the report’s recommendations.

1.3 After consideration of the progress made after six months, this Committee commended the progress made to date and reiterated its continued interest in and awareness of the review. However, it also noted the importance of the Parish Council maintaining progress in meeting its recommendations, asking for an additional 9-month update with further information regarding 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. The Committee also noted that it expected that all recommendations would be implemented by the time of 12 month report. A letter to this effect was sent by the Monitoring Officer in early April 2019.

1.4 The letter written by the Monitoring Officer was not received in time to be discussed at the April meeting of the Parish Council. However, when it was discussed at the May meeting the deadline for 9 months had already been reached and the 12 month report was due in the month of July. The Parish Council considered that implementation of all the recommendations was unachievable in the current situation. The Parish Council therefore requested an extension to the deadline and this was granted by the Joint Standards Complaints Committee at its meeting in July 2019.

2.0 Latest Position

2.1 Since the last report one formal Code of Conduct complaint received in relation to Easton on the Hill Parish Councillors is still ongoing, which is being investigated, five
have been completed with no further action to be taken in four cases and other action having been taken in the final case.

2.2 The Joint Standards Complaints Committee at its meeting on 16 October 2019 noted that good progress was now being made, with a new chairman and parish clerk in position. It was also noted that Easton on the Hill Parish Council had considered the matter at its parish council meeting held on Monday 14 October.

At this meeting the Committee expressed the importance of the Parish Council maintaining its good progress in meeting the recommendations of the Action Plan, as part of the revised timetable.

2.3 The Committee resolved to request an updated and final report after 15 months (by the end of December 19), conveying the expectation that all recommendations would 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.

3.0 Summary

3.1 There are some ongoing issues to be resolved at the Parish Council. However, it is noted that since the new Chair and Clerk have been appointed no new complaints have been received and that all councillors have publically committed to treat each other with respect. 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.

3.2 Attached at Appendix 1 is the Parish Council’s final position in respect of the recommendations.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

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 Health Impact Implications

6.1 There are no health impact implications arising from this report.

7.0 Legal Implications

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

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 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.

9.0 Resource and Financial Implications

9.1 There are no new financial or resource implications arising from this report.
10.0 Constitutional Implications

10.1 There are no constitutional implications for ENC arising from this report.

11.0 Implications for our Customers

11.1 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.

12.0 Corporate Outcomes

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

13.0 Recommendation

13.1 The Committee is recommended to

   a) review progress, recognise the achievements to date, highlight any further areas of concern; and

   b) consider next steps, including the appropriateness of now signing off on the remaining elements of the action plan to be delivered as business as usual by the Parish Council.

Legal

Power: Localism Act 2011

Other considerations:

Background Papers:

Person Originating: Ben Smith, Deputy Monitoring Officer,
☎ 01832 742113, ⬃ bsmith@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk

Date: 29/01/20

CFO 10/02/20

MO 10/02/20 (Deputy)

CX 10/02/20

D. Oliver
| Recommendation | Resolution - EGM Sept 2018 | Action at EGM | Action to date – February 2019 | Note that Priority One but is not yet complete, although some training has taken place. The Monitoring Officer would be interested in knowing:  
- What further training need was identified?  
- When will that be carried out?  
- How much is budgeted for this training for 2019/20? | Update September 2019 | Update December 2019 |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| R1 The Council should develop a comprehensive and ongoing training and development strategy. | This is considered priority 1 | The council were given several examples of training policies and these need to be reviewed and the statement of intent adopting | In-house Cllr training event arranged for 25 Feb 2019 (training delivered by Danny Moody, CEX NCALC)  
- Further training to be arranged following this session once requirements established.  
- Training Budget for Cllrs and Clerk included in 2019/20 Estimates. | A training needs analysis will be done, especially now we have new Cllrs, training opportunities will be sought, however any more training will probably be done next year after the election and new budget.  
More training has already taken place; chairmanship, planning and new councilors training is booked.  
This year there is £200 Clerk and £100 Cllrs in budget – already accounted for.  
More £ will be built into the budget for training for next year. New training manager in place at ENC too might offer more opportunities and courses. | Training budget is spent for this financial year.  
New budget for training set as Cllrs £600 and Clerk £500 | No more action required until new budget and Councillors in place in April 2020 and mix of Councillors known after May election.  
Full council to assess needs. |
| R2 The Council should develop an agreed understanding of the role and expectations for individual councillors when they are acting as Full Council, as committee members, as individuals and as representatives of the Council externally. | | To be included in In-house training event arranged for 25 Feb 2019  
Policy to be written and adopted by May 2019 setting out expectations. | The Monitoring Officer would be interested in knowing whether the role and expectations of individual members was covered in the in 25.02.19 training? If not when will the further guidance be sought and in what form will the ‘agreed understanding’ be documented and when. | The role and expectations were included in February’s training. Most councillors attended this. The Good Cllr Guide is still used and also reminders at meetings (learning points)  
In May 2020, when all Councillors are up for election, basic training will be revisited and the roles and responsibilities covered again, tailored to individual needs and experience. | No more action required after elections May 2020 when any new Councillors may need briefing. |
| R3 | The Council should review its policy as to how correspondence is dealt with and responded to without absorbing the limited administrative resources available to the Council. This would include an agreed policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious correspondence. **This is considered priority 1 and definitely needs to be addressed asap**. Councillors were given examples of correspondence and vexatious correspondence policies to review and to be adopted as soon as possible. | • Unreasonable Complainant Policy & Procedure adopted Jan 2019  
• Customer Service Policy to be written and adopted to set out standards of responses | Noted UCPP Policy adopted. The Monitoring Officer would be interested in knowing who is writing the Customer Service Policy and what is the target date for adoption? | No more action required. |
| R4 | The Council should agree how governance issues should be raised in meetings to allow reasonable discussion but also to allow other business to be transacted. **This is considered a priority 1**. As from Oct 2018 the council will allocate 10 minutes at the start of the meeting to discuss any governance issues. It was Resolved to set up a Staffing Committee to oversee all staff issues. | • Adopted – regular agenda item  
• Staffing Cttee to be reformed now that all vacancies have been filled  
• Member/Officer Protocol adopted at Jan 2019 meeting | Complete | Statutory Committee Terms of Reference were agreed at the September meeting and included sick absence policy. Discipline/grievance and appraisal to follow shortly. Clerk to write. Unsure about need for work schedule at the present time but will review. | Staffing Committee meeting to be arranged by the clerk in December. Chair to be appointed and then an agenda and actions to come Ongoing by clerk/committee |
| R5 | The Council and the clerk should agree a work schedule to ensure that the clerk’s limited availability is focussed and that there are realistic expectations on her time. **Priority 1**. To be addressed | • Member/Officer Protocol Adopted at Jan 2019 meeting  
• Further work required on response times to and from Cllrs and Clerk | Noted that the Protocol has been adopted. The Monitoring Officer would be interested to know when agreement is expected to be reached on response times and how it will be documented. | Cllrs asked about response times and agreed that 48 hours will be the standard, to be in the Customer Service policy. Clerk hours/availability have been added to Email signature. | No more action required. |
| R6 | The Council needs to agree a member-officer protocol which would include a shared agreement as to the circumstances when members should have access to officer time and how the clerk should respond to queries from individual members. | Priority 1 | To be addressed | | |
| R7 | The Council should ensure that there is an appropriate performance appraisal framework in place for the clerk which supports development of the clerk and ensures performance is rewarded accordingly and a clear route for the clerk to raise staffing issues. | To be addressed by the new Staffing committee | • Action outstanding – to be reviewed along with Clerks role for new appointment | No evidence as no confirmation that Staffing Cttee has been formed.  
• What action has been taken to secure a permanent Clerk? Lack of Staffing Committee should not have prevented this being implemented by Full Council. Has anything been done/reviewed in preparation for appraisal system? | New, permanent Clerk is in place.  
Staffing Committee and policies above to address other issues. | Staffing Committee meeting to be held in December/ early January, see above. Staff appraisal system to be agreed. **Ongoing by clerk/committee** |
| R8 | All councillors should give an individual signed undertaking to treat fellow councillors and officers with respect and not to make personal attacks on individuals or their integrity. Until such respect is shown the Council cannot move forward. | It was Resolved to Reject this Proposal | Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting  
• That item R8 should remain as an outstanding matter and be reviewed at a future meeting following the NCALC full Council training scheduled for 25 February 2019 | The Monitoring Officer notes with disappointment that it has not yet proved possible to adopt this recommendation. It is hoped that the recent training will have provided the necessary context to revisit this recommendation without the need for a special meeting. | At a separate, dedicated meeting Councillors were asked again about signing a declaration (or a copy of the code of conduct as an alternative) and not all Councillors felt it was necessary. All Councillors agreed they will treat others with respect and some said they felt they had already signed up to this by accepting the position as a Councillor anyway. | At the November meeting it was minuted that all Councillors voted to treat fellow councillors with respect. No new code of conduct complaints have been lodged since the new chair has been in place. No further action required |
| R9 | All councillors should undertake that, where they have concerns about the way a decision has been made or a procedure followed they should discuss this with the clerk and the clerk should be allowed to give a ruling with reasons such as a reference to existing policy or legislation as to whether or not the concern is legitimate. Where the concern is legitimate such a ruling should include the steps needed either to rectify the matter or the changes needed to prevent the matter re-occurring. | The six-month rule is already in the standing orders and needs to be followed | Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting  
• That the Clerk ensure an electronic copy of all up to date Policies and Procedures be available at all meetings for reference  
• That all Councillor be issued with electronic copies of all up to date Policies and Procedures except Cllr Bates who should be provided with a hard copy. | The Monitoring Officer welcomes the resolution and suggest that the policies and procedures are added to the Council website so there is transparency for councillors and residents.  
Cllr Bates is given a hard copy. | Policies and procedures have been added to the website. Newer, recently agreed ones will be added asap. By the Clerk. | No further action required. |
<p>| R10 | Where advice is needed from East Northamptonshire Council or the Northants CALC on procedural matters this should always be done through the clerk. The Monitoring Officer will continue to provide advice to individual councillors on their personal position in relation to declarations of interest but if there are concerns about the position of other councillors that advice should be asked for by, and given to, the clerk. | It was Resolved to add this statement to Standing Orders | • Action outstanding - To be included for adoption in May | The Monitoring Officer notes the intention to change the Standing Orders at the Annual meeting in May. She is aware that councillors have started to informally implement this action in advance of this date. | Statement has been added to the SOs and uploaded to the website and Councillors are following this procedure. | No further action required. |
| R11 | The Parish Council should consider a process for recording or filming of future meetings. | This is already in Standing Orders | • Recording of Meetings Policy to be presented for consideration | The Monitoring Officer would welcome details of what additional benefit adoption of a policy would and whether a process which outlines the position for the public attending the meeting might provide a faster response. | There is a policy on filming and recording of meetings on the website. It needs reviewing as dated Nov 2014 and will be reviewed in November 2019. | This was reviewed and agreed at the November meeting. No further action required. |
| R12 | The Parish Council should collectively agree what language is and is not appropriate in meetings and correspondence among councillors and with the clerk, how such language should be challenged in meetings and how meetings can be run more efficiently without getting bogged down in minutiae nor stifling legitimate debate. | It was Resolved to include this with R8 | • The use of the term Clerk/Chairman and Cllrs within meeting has been introduced by Locum Clerk and Cllrs have adopted unofficially at the current time. | The introduction of use of formal titles at Parish Council meetings is noted. However the Monitoring Officer has concerns that given that no date has yet been for implementing R* to which this is being linked. | R8 has not been implemented and is not planned to be. However, action has been taken independently in that; meetings have had preamble regarding respect and regard/empathy to others. Members of the public are reminded about the policy on speaking in public at each meeting so as to avoid individual Councillors being identified. | R8 is achieved in part and sufficiently. Meetings conducted with this in mind and Cllrs are mindful of appropriate language etc. No further action required. |</p>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Council needs to adopt a Disciplinary and Sickness and Absence Policy for the Clerk.</th>
<th></th>
<th>To be addressed by the staffing committee</th>
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<th>See response to R5. The Monitoring Officer would welcome further details of when and how this recommendation will be implemented as it is seen as an important part of the Council’s duty of care to its employee.</th>
<th>Policies to be sourced by Clerk and put to the Staffing Committee, R5</th>
<th>All policies written and to be agreed at staffing committee in December/January. Ongoing by clerk/committee</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R13</td>
<td>The Council needs to adopt a ‘need to know’ policy in line with legal requirements so that members are clear what information they are entitled to see.</td>
<td>Priority 1</td>
<td>To include with R1</td>
<td>Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting-</td>
<td>The Monitoring Officer would like to know how it is planned to implement this Priority 1 action and when it will be implemented.</td>
<td>Working parties and committees already set up. No further action required.</td>
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<td>• That further work be undertaken on the Council's governance for delegation of duties through working parties and committees</td>
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<td>Once agreed, “Need to know basis” statement as below to be added to SOs. c. Some items may, if made public, or shared with all Councillors in detail, may be detrimental to an individual. If sensitive or items of a delicate nature are noted as such, Councillors will allow discretion by the Clerk not to share more information than is needed. Further training to be sought for new Cllrs.</td>
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<td>R14</td>
<td>The Council needs to adopt an agreed policy on reporting of fly-tipping.</td>
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<td>It was Resolved to publish on the websites the policy for reporting fly tipping</td>
<td></td>
<td>Action unknown – if adopted it is not a written policy and not advertised on the website</td>
<td>Link included in policy. on website and notice board now. No further action required.</td>
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<td>R15</td>
<td>The Council needs to review its scheme of delegation to ensure it is working as efficiently as possible.</td>
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<td>It was Resolved to include this as part of the training policy</td>
<td>Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting-</td>
<td>The Monitoring Officer is less than clear about what it is considered appropriate for link this to the training policy rather than to the review of Standing Orders scheduled for May</td>
<td>Review of SOs has been done. Review of committees and members done also. Division of work is better. No further action required.</td>
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<td>R16</td>
<td>The Council needs to ensure its minutes are simply a record of agreed actions and decisions in line with best practice and that those present at a meeting are clear what</td>
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<td>It was Resolved that to ensure clarity the clerk will repeat back what the proposal is and what is voted on.</td>
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<td>Locum Clerk minutes are in preferred format. Permanent Clerk to be encouraged to continue this style of</td>
<td>New Clerk continuing same minutes style, with slightly less detail. No further action required.</td>
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<td>R17</td>
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<td>The Monitoring Officer notes the positive step change in both content of minutes and timely publication on the new Council website and would welcome</td>
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<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
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<td>R18</td>
<td>All members need to be familiar with Standing Orders and should have a pack which contains all policies, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders that they bring to each and every meeting to aid understanding and avoid confusion.</td>
<td>Action outstanding – see R9</td>
<td>There is a conflict between this recommendation and the proposed solution to R9 which needs to be resolved. Unless the council meeting venue has wifi and all councillors have equipment to access electronic copies, it may be more efficient and effective to have a reference hard copy brought to all meetings by the Clerk.</td>
<td>Hardcopy is being kept at the venue.</td>
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<td>R19</td>
<td>The Council needs to ensure members of the public understand their role at the meeting and how the Council works through provision of appropriate information.</td>
<td>Public Participation Policy adopted at Jan 2019 meeting and published on website</td>
<td>The Monitoring Officer welcomes the implementation of this recommendations.</td>
<td>No further action required.</td>
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<td>R20</td>
<td>The ‘3-minute’ rule in Standing Orders should be enforced and all councillors should support the chair in ensuring the meeting is run efficiently and without conflict.</td>
<td>Recommendation adopted</td>
<td>The Monitoring Officer welcomes the implementation of this recommendations.</td>
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<td>R21</td>
<td>The Council should develop a project plan as a matter of urgency to develop proposals for the future of the playing fields to be put to the community as a whole.</td>
<td>Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting – That a working party be formed at the APM</td>
<td>The Monitoring Officer is disappointed that no progress will be made on this until the Annual Meeting and would ask if Terms of Reference been drafted yet to support a May start?</td>
<td>Working party set up Terms of reference done Leaflets sent to residents to ask what they want – responses being analysed for next steps.</td>
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<td>R22</td>
<td>The Council should develop a project plan to review implementation of the Village Plan</td>
<td>Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting – That a working party be formed at the APM to review the implementation of the</td>
<td>The Monitoring Officer is disappointed that no progress will be made on this until the Annual Meeting and would ask if Terms of Reference been drafted yet to support a May</td>
<td>Residents and Cllrs are trying to get more volunteers and a date for a first meeting. 5 in total at the moment. Lots more advertising for new members will be done if necessary and a special event is planned to</td>
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R21 Priority 1

It was Resolved that this should be done as a matter of urgency

Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting – That a working party be formed at the APM

The Monitoring Officer is disappointed that no progress will be made on this until the Annual Meeting and would ask if Terms of Reference been drafted yet to support a May start?

Working party set up Terms of reference done Leaflets sent to residents to ask what they want – responses being analysed for next steps.

Final recomms communicated and out for consultation and feedback. Ongoing by full council.

R22 Priority 1

It was Resolved that this should be done as a matter of urgency

Resolution at Feb 2019 meeting – That a working party be formed at the APM to review the implementation of the

The Monitoring Officer is disappointed that no progress will be made on this until the Annual Meeting and would ask if Terms of Reference been drafted yet to support a May

Residents and Cllrs are trying to get more volunteers and a date for a first meeting. 5 in total at the moment. Lots more advertising for new members will be done if necessary and a special event is planned to

VPWP meetings now taking place and event planned by committee members in January to raise
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Number</th>
<th>Action Description</th>
<th>Resolution Date</th>
<th>Action Start Date</th>
<th>Key Aspects</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R23</td>
<td>The Council should ensure that the public understands the work of the Parish Council, and is engaged in agreeing proposals for the long-term future of the community.</td>
<td>This is addressed as part of the Village Plan</td>
<td>See R22</td>
<td>Village Plan and move it forward.</td>
<td>Ongoing by working party</td>
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<td>R24</td>
<td>The Council chair and clerk should look to learn from and share best practice with outstanding local councils.</td>
<td>It was Resolved that the Chairman and future Clerk would discuss best practice with other outstanding councils</td>
<td>See R22</td>
<td>That a working party be formed at the APM to review the implementation of the Village Plan and move it forward.</td>
<td>Will engage residents at event in January. Other &quot;stalls&quot; planned on NHW, playing fields, finances and role of Councillor/elections. Ongoing by full council.</td>
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<td>R25</td>
<td>Where Easton-on-the-Hill Parish Council needs to use external support to comply with these recommendations, they should consult with East Northamptonshire Council and the Northants CALC before agreeing such support to ensure they have considered all the options and are obtaining expert advice at value for money.</td>
<td>It was Resolved to accept this proposal</td>
<td>Do already consult MO and NCALC. Will continue.</td>
<td>Clerk to start Cilca next April. Clerk on FB network where can get lots of advice and best practice,</td>
<td>Ongoing, supportive and helpful relationship with NCALC</td>
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<td>R26</td>
<td>Easton-on-the-Hill Parish Council should report on its progress in implementing this action plan to the monitoring officer of East Northamptonshire Council in 6 months and again in 12 months after the date of this report.</td>
<td>It was Resolved to report back to ENC Monitoring officer in 6 months and then 12 months</td>
<td>9 month report not possible. Extension requested. Extension of 3 months granted by JSCC on 17/7/19. Final report made here.</td>
<td>9 month report not possible. Extension requested. Extension of 3 months granted by JSCC on 17/7/19. Final report made here.</td>
<td>Extension of 3 months granted by JSCC on 17/7/19. Final report made here.</td>
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actions by the end of the 12 months.