Agenda Item 6.

Joint Standards Complaints Committee
24 February 2021

Activity Report of the Monitoring Officer

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

1.0 Monitoring Officer Enquiries and Complaints

1.1 Since the last meeting of this Committee on 14 October 2020 there have continued to be enquiries in relation to Members’ declarations of interest and parish council governance and advice. All have been responded to.

1.2 There have been no new Code of Conduct complaints since the last meeting.

1.3 All outstanding complaints have been completed. Of the five complaints that were ongoing at the date of the last meeting, four Investigation Reports have since been received from External Investigators and the Monitoring Officer, having considered the findings and following consultation with the Independent Person and Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee, decided that no further action was necessary.

1.4 The fifth was dealt with by the Joint Standards Complaints Hearing Panel during October and November 2020.

Following hearing all the evidence the Panel concluded that:

- The first strand involved an allegation that the Councillor did not display integrity and honesty, as required by paragraph 2.2 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct. This was confirmed and upheld as a breach.
- The second strand involved an allegation that the Councillor did not demonstrate objectivity in decision making, as required by paragraph 2.3 of the Code. This was not considered a breach and no action taken.

1.5 Consequently, the following sanctions were imposed relating to the first strand of the complaint:

- That an apology should be made by the Councillor to the complainant;
- That the public written summary of the complaint and its outcome be published on the Council’s website;
- That the Monitoring Officer be instructed to arrange training for the Councillor in the following terms:
  o Improvement in Skills in the Communication Between Members and Officers, with Specific Reference to the Member/Officer Code of Conduct and ICT training.

1.6 It is confirmed that each of the three sanctions have now been complied with and the case is now closed.
1.7 The Register of Interests for both ENC Members and its Town and Parish Council Members are kept up to date and changes are made to the website as required for both. A number of changes have been notified during this period.

2.0 Training and the Code of Conduct

2.1 No training has been delivered since the last Committee meeting and over the winter months one to one advice has been provided to members by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officers as required.

2.2 The Local Government Association (LGA) consultation on the new Model Code of Conduct ran for ten weeks from 8 June to 17 August 2020, with an informal additional deadline running to the end of August. As members are aware, ENC responded to the Consultation within the initial timeframe. The new Model Code was issued on 23 December 2020 and can be found at the LGA’s website.

2.3 Work continues on the preparations for the Standards regime within the new North Northamptonshire Council. The new Monitoring Officer, Adele Wylie, was appointed by the Shadow Authority on 17 August 2020 and took up post in December 2020. At the time of writing, the draft Constitution for the new Council, containing the new Standards regime was due to be published on 17 February 2021, for consideration by the Shadow Authority on 25 February 2021.

3.0 Request for Dispensations

3.1 None

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 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 enables the Committee to maintain an overview of the standards regime and reduced the risk of non-compliance with legislation.

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 Recommendations

12.1 The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report in terms of monitoring of complaints and other activity.

[Reason: to demonstrate active monitoring of the local ethical standards position.]

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<td>Other considerations: Constitution of East Northamptonshire Council</td>
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**Background Papers:**

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**Date:** 15/02/2021

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