

Report to: **Standards Committee**

Date: **22 April 2014**

Title of report: **Annual Report of the Standards Committee**

By: **Assistant Chief Executive**

Purpose of report: **To provide an update on Member Conduct issues, the work of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Standards Committee is recommended to**

- 1) note the report; and**
  - 2) agree the report for submission to the County Council for consideration.**
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### **1. Financial Implications**

1.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **2. Background information**

2.1 Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 one complaint was received against a Member of the County Council. The complaint was considered by the Assessment Sub Committee. It was agreed to refer the allegation to the Monitoring Officer for further action.

2.2 During 2013/14 the Committee met to consider the Delegated Investigator's report regarding a complaint that was received during 2012/13 which had been considered by an Assessment Sub Committee and had been referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation. Having considered the report and questioned the Investigator, the Committee agreed to accept the finding of no failure (ie that the subject Member had not breached the Code) and that a 'Finding of no Failure' Notice be sent to the Subject Member and the Complainant.

2.3 It is considered that the standards of conduct among Members and co-opted members of the Council remain high and maintaining good standards is taken seriously. There was only one case considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee in the period covered by this report, in comparison to one in 2012/13 one in 2011/12, two in 2010/11 and 4 in 2009/10.

2.4 In April 2013, the Committee proposed that a report should be submitted to the Governance Committee regarding Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for councillors. During 2013/14 a report on this issue was submitted to the Governance Committee and the Committee agreed that councillors should only be requested to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check if they are to be involved in a Regulated Activity.

### **3. Applications for Dispensation**

3.1 In limited circumstances, Members can apply in writing for dispensations to take part in business that they would otherwise have been unable to participate in through having prejudicial interests. During 2013/14 there were no applications for dispensations.

3.2 All dispensations are entered on the register of Members' interests and remain there for the appropriate period.

#### **4. Register of Members' Interests**

4.1 The Monitoring Officer is required to establish and maintain a register of interests of Members of the Council. All Members have completed and returned their registers and are reminded every six months of the need to notify the Monitoring Officer of any changes. The registers are available for public inspection and are available on the Council's website.

4.2 A register of Gifts and Hospitality is also maintained by the Monitoring Officer. Members have to register gifts and hospitality received with an estimated value of £50 or more. There is an ongoing requirement to keep the information up to date. Councillors must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new registerable personal interest or change to any registered interest, give written notification to the Monitoring Officer.

#### **5. Training**

5.1 Guidance regarding the standards regime was circulated to all newly elected councillors. The Code of Conduct including register of interests, personal interests, disclosable pecuniary interests and gifts and hospitality, were covered during presentation at the Induction Day on 9 May 2013.

#### **6. Recommendations**

6.1 The Committee is recommended to note the report and to recommend to County Council the Annual Report of the Standards Committee for consideration.

PHILIP BAKER

Assistant Chief Executive

Contact Officer – Andy Cottell, Democratic Services Manager (01273 481955)

Local Members: All

Background Documents: None

Appendix 1

Complaints received by the Standards Committee 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014

Reference	Date Received	Type and Date of Committee	Complainant	Summary of Complaint	Outcome	Resolved
SC.001.13	7 February 2013	Assessment Sub Committee 6 March 2013  Standards Committee 9 July 2013	Member of the public	Breach of General Principles of Code of Conduct (Paragraphs 5 and 6a)	Referred to Monitoring Officer for investigation  Finding of no failure	Yes
SC.001.14	6 December 2013	Assessment Sub Committee 7 January 2014	Councillor	Breach of General Principles of Code of Conduct (Paragraphs 3(1) and 5)	Referred to Monitoring Officer for further action.	Yes