

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Audit and Standards Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>16 July 2019</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Peacehaven Town Council Code of Conduct - Update</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All Peacehaven Wards</b>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<b>To receive an update from Peacehaven Town Council</b>
<b>Officer recommendation(s):</b>	<p>(1) To note the progress made by Peacehaven Town Council on matters relating to governance and the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>(2) That the Monitoring Officer writes to the Clerk at Peacehaven Town Council acknowledging the progress made.</p>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	<b>To comply with the request of this Committee for an update report.</b>
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	<b>Name:</b> Catherine Knight <b>Post title:</b> Assistant Director – Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer <b>E-mail:</b> Catherine.knight@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk <b>Telephone number:</b> 01273 085864

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 In November 2018 this Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer as to wide ranging Code of Conduct issues at Peacehaven Town Council.
- 1.2 This Committee endorsed the Monitoring Officer's proposal that the Town Council be recommended to adopt an action plan. The Committee asked that the Town Council, through its clerk, provide updates after 3 and 6 months, assessing the progress made against the action plan.
- 1.3 The recommended action plan provided for:
  - The appointment of an external person / consultancy with the relevant professional skills to review the Town Council's processes and procedures. This should include a review of the role of the Employment Sub-Committee and how complaints senior officers should be dealt with in the future.

- The implementation of an explicit, pragmatic and rational Scheme of Delegation that also sets out how any breaches of this should be dealt with appropriately and expeditiously. A good Scheme of Delegation will facilitate more efficient processes for conducting council business, will improve openness and accountability and will streamline decision-making and action for the benefit of residents.
- The training / mentoring of officers and councillors to identify and rectify any weakness in their understanding of the Town Council's procedures and the Code. The Town Council might want to take the opportunity to review their current Code as in my view a Code that consists solely of the Nolan principles can lack the detail necessary to assist members in understanding their responsibilities.
- Training and guidance on conflict resolution with a view to improving working relations between elected members and Town Council officers through more effective communication and improved conduct. As part of this process I would recommend that all parties work together on reviewing their Member / Officer protocol to ensure that it is fully understood, and ingrains agreed parameters.

1.4 The 3 month update received from the Town Council reported progress as follows:-

- Bespoke staff handbook produced, containing all relevant employment policies, including grievance, disciplinary, sickness and absence, performance management, recruitment, pay etc.
- Work in progress:
  - Review of Standing Orders
  - Review of Financial Regulations
  - Review of Committee Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation
  - Produce template for future business planning
  - Review existing policies / procedures generally
- Post-election councillor training arranged for 23 May 2019

1.5 Peacehaven's Town Clerk has now written to the Monitoring Officer with a 6 month update as follows:-

"I am pleased to report as follows;-

1. Standing Orders have been reviewed and updated, in line with the latest NALC model and were adopted by Council at its Annual Meeting in May of this year (copy attached).

2. Financial Regulations have been reviewed and updated and were adopted by Council at its Annual Meeting in May of this year (copy attached). These will be brought into line with the latest NALC model which is due to be published very soon.
3. Committee Terms of Reference have been reviewed and updated and were adopted by Council at its Annual Meeting in May of this year (copy attached).
4. At its meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> May (copy of minutes attached – Item PF364) the Council's Policy & Finance Committee set up Business Plan Working Party.
5. The attached schedule shows that most policies have now been reviewed and updated where necessary. This work continues and I will be looking closely to see if any additional policies are needed."

1.6 The above shows Peacehaven Town Council to have considered carefully the outcome of the investigation into complaints made against Peacehaven town councillors which was concluded in October 2015 and to have taken note of the Monitoring Officer's recommendation that it adopt an action plan as set out in the investigation report.

1.7 The review and update of council processes and procedures as described above, together with councillor training provides a sound basis for ongoing improvements in governance at the Town Council.

## **2 Financial appraisal**

None arising from this report.

## **3 Legal implications**

None arising from this report.