

Body: **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Date: **4 December 2013**

Subject: **Members and Standards: an update**

Report Of: **LAWYER TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER**

Ward(s) All

Purpose To assist the Audit and Governance Committee in fulfilling its obligations in relation to member standards.

Recommendations: That the Committee note the following:

- The information supplied to it regarding complaints against members either received in or determined since the last quarterly report
- Other relevant information supplied to it regarding member training

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1.0 Background

1.1 Members will recall their longstanding invitation to the Monitoring Officer to provide quarterly updates on Standards-related matters. This report aims to update the Committee on the standards and related issues which have arisen since the Committee's last meeting.

2.0 Complaints

2.1 No new formal complaints against members have been received in during this quarter. As none remain outstanding from previous quarters, no complaints await determination at time of writing.

3.1 Dispensations

3.2 Since the last quarterly report, dispensations were applied for and granted to all Liberal Democrat members of Cabinet to enable them to participate in discussions and in voting on all matters relating to Information Technology provision for members, this to include the setting of relevant member allowances as well as policies and guidance. Those dispensations will remain in force until end of May 2015 provided that the facts which gave rise to them do not change. Members have been notified accordingly.

4.1 Member training

- 4.1 Members will recall that a session on Standards was arranged some time in advance for a date in November 2013. At the behest of the Standards Panel, the session's remit was to assist members in deepening their understanding of the relationship between the Code of Conduct for Members and the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations. It also aimed to provide an update on other Standards-related matters arising.
- 4.2 Regrettably the above training session has had to be postponed (to a date at the end of January 2014) when it transpired that the majority of members were unable to attend on the allocated date. While this is clearly a setback, new invitations are due to be sent out shortly by Member Services and individual members of this Committee will no doubt encourage their colleagues to keep the new date free if at all possible. The independent persons have also been asked to attend the new date.
- 4.3 This Committee will be mindful that its terms of reference include the reviewing and monitoring of member training and development not just in relation to Standards and ethics but also across all the areas considered necessary to equip members to perform their roles effectively. With this in mind members are invited to note the sessions provided recently to the members of the authority's two primary regulatory committees: the Planning and Licensing Act and General Licensing Committees.
- 4.4 Between 1.4.12 and 30.3.13, three sessions were held for members of Planning Committee and three sessions for members of the Licensing Act and General Licensing Committees. Between 1.4.13 and 1.10.13, two sessions were held for Planning Committee members while a session held outside the borough had been made available to Eastbourne's Licensing Committee members in late November 2013. The figures for the take up of the latter session were not available at time of writing.
- 4.5 The subject matter of the sessions included updates on relevant areas. These included the changes to permitted development rights in Planning law and changes to Temporary Event Notices as a result of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act. Attendance at the both types of training averaged around ten members, which is considered a fair proportion of the total number of members who currently sit on each (twelve on Planning Committee and thirteen on the Licensing Committees).

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 There has been no consultation.

6.0 Resource Implications

- 6.1 None.

7.0 Financial

- 7.1 None.

8.0 Staffing

8.1 None.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 The requirement that authorities have in place arrangements to monitor member conduct and to promote effective decision-making remains a feature of the current Standards regime. This report updates the Committee and assists it in discharging its responsibilities in this regard, and in fulfilling its remit as defined in the Committee's terms of reference.

Victoria Simpson

LAWYER TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

Previous reports and minutes of the Committee and Panel.

Articles in the Local Government Lawyer

ACSeS bulletins