

Independent Review of the Council's Standards Arrangements

Standards Committee

Date: 24th March 2014

Author:	Director of Law and Democratic Services
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To receive the report of the recent independent review, undertaken by Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd, on how the council currently handles complaints against elected members.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Receive a presentation by Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd (Hoey Ainscough) on their review of how the council currently handles complaints against elected members;
- 2.2 Consider the proposals from Hoey Ainscough;
- 2.3 Agree a 'Procedure for Dealing with Complaints Against Members' to be submitted to Council for adoption at its meeting on 3rd April 2014, if practicable.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Standards Committee has previously requested, and had included in its work programme for 2013/14, a review of the Council's arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints in order to improve transparency, ensure the Council is open to hearing the views of residents and also to learn from existing good practice elsewhere.
- 3.2 The Committee subsequently received concerns expressed by a small group of local residents about the current arrangements and endorsed the appointment of an Independent Review body. To this end, and following a tendering process, Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd were appointed to carry out the work.
- 3.3 In carrying out this review, Mr Paul Hoey and Ms Natalie Ainscough have met with a number of relevant local stakeholders, including:
- The Chair and representatives of the Standards Committee;
 - Members of the Council, including all three group leaders;
 - A group of local residents;

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor, 01793 463012, staylor@swindon.gov.uk.

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- Both Independent Persons appointed to the Standards Committee,
- Council Officers involved with, and supporting, the complaints function including the Monitoring Officer,

to discuss their view of the existing arrangements and the specific concerns which had led to the Standard Committee's request for the review.

- 3.4 A copy of the initial report of Hoey Ainscough Ltd following their review of the Council's arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints is not yet available due to the timescale of the interviews carried out and their intention to circulate their draft report for comment prior to it being finalised, but will be circulated as Appendix 1 when received.
- 3.5 Hoey Ainscough will be present at the meeting to present their report and to respond to any questions members might have regarding the matters raised and their conclusions and recommendations regarding the council's arrangements for handling complaints against elected members.
- 3.6 Taking into account any member comment and any other representations that may be made, the Committee is invited to consider the proposals from Hoey Ainscough and, if practicable, agree a 'Procedure for Dealing with Complaints Against Members' to be submitted to Council for adoption at its meeting on 3rd April 2014.
- 3.7 A copy of the Council's current arrangements for dealing with Member Code of Conduct Complaints

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Committee has the option of not accepting the report or any of the recommendations detailed therein.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Any financial or procurement implications will be contained within existing budgetary provision.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 This covering report has no legal or human rights implications.

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All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other implications that have been identified as important for this report.

Links to One Swindon, Plans and Policies

- 5.4 Monitoring of issues of probity in the Council underpins the Council's plans and policies and the delivery of One Swindon objectives.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment has not been completed for this report, as it does not currently recommend a change in Council policy or service.

Risk Management

- 5.6 A risk assessment has not been completed in relation this report, as it does as it does not recommend a change in Council policy or service. Arrangements for meeting the requirements of the Localism Act and monitoring probity of the Council, ensures that good governance is maintained and protects the reputation of the organisation.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – the initial report of Hoey Ainscough Ltd, following their review of the Council's arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints (to follow).
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – A copy of the Council's current arrangements for dealing with Member Code of Conduct Complaints"