

Ethical Framework Update

Standards Committee

Date: 3rd February 2015

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

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To provide an update on various matters relating to the Council's Ethical Framework, to keep the Committee informed of issues of probity in the Council.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Welcome the Ethical Framework update.

3. Detail

Dispensations

- 3.1 Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 enables members who consider that they may have a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) to apply for a dispensation to allow them to speak and vote.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 12 December 2012, the Standards Committee authorised the Director of Law and Democratic Services to grant any applications for a dispensation in relation to any meeting at which any matter which has a bearing on the setting of the discounts and exemptions for Council Tax is being or is due to be considered for a four year period. Dispensations are granted in conjunction with the Chair or the Standards Committee and are reported back to the next available meeting.
- 3.3 As reported to the Committee in October 2014, dispensations were sought by all the new members who have joined the Council since the election of May 2014, in relation to any meeting at which any matter which has a bearing on the setting of the Council Tax is being or is due to be considered. These requests covered both of the restrictions in Section 31(4) of the Localism Act 2011 so as to allow them to participate in any discussion and participate in any vote without risk of challenge.
- 3.4 These have been granted until 14 October 2016 in line with the other dispensations already granted on this matter to existing members since failure to grant a dispensation would impede the transaction of the business because of the number of members having the same disclosable pecuniary interest.

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- 3.5 No further dispensations have been granted by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee, since the last meeting.

Summary of Code of Conduct Complaints

- 3.6 Committee asked for an update to each meeting of Code of Conduct complaints indicating which fresh complaints from 2014/15 onwards have been made by members of the public and which have been made by a councillor.
- 3.7 The updated table is as follows:

Year	Complaints	No Further Action	Referred for Monitoring Officer or other Action	Referred for Investigation	Breach following hearing	No action following referral	Local Resolution
2008/09	14	13	0	1	1	0	N/A
2009/10	7	4	1	2	1	1	N/A
2010/11	12	4	4	4	0	4	N/A
2011/12	10	6	2	2	0	2	N/A
2012/13	5	5	0	0	0	0	N/A
2013/14	14	10	1	3	0	1	2
2014/15 (to date)	2*	1	-	-	-	-	1

* one of these complaints was made by a Borough Councillor

Training

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix 1 are the details of the proposed training events to be held over the remainder of the 2014-15 Municipal Year. A log of member attendance at these events (if held) will be kept and reported to this Committee at a future meeting.
- 3.2 Members have previously been advised that discussions have taken place on the potential for additional training for Councillors. Work is progressing on enhancing the support and training offered to members such as mentoring opportunities and hosting regular briefings on Committee-specific issues.

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- 3.3 So far as Ethical Framework refresher training is concerned, a session has been arranged for newly elected members, to which all members are invited, on 28th January. Members will be updated at the meeting as to the level of interest.
- 3.4 The Committee is reminded that, at present, a number of sessions are held by the Monitoring Officer each year around the parishes to train parish councillors on the ethical framework and chairing skills. Borough Councillors who are also parish councillors are able to attend. As usual, attendance at these events will be logged and reported to this Committee at a future meeting.
- 3.5 Since the last meeting of the Standards Committee, a training session for Parish Councillors was held on 12th November at the offices of Haydon Wick Parish Council. Eight parish councillors from Haydon Wick PC attended.
- 3.6 A further session was planned for 14th January but, unfortunately, due to a number of apologies from parish councillors who had indicated their intention to attend, this session will be rescheduled and parish councillors from other parishes invited to attend.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Any alternative options are set out in the body of the report.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Any financial or procurement implications will be contained within the existing budget.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 The legal and human rights implications, where applicable, are set out in the body of the report.

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.

Diversity Impact Assessment

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

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Risk Management

- 5.5 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 – Member Training Events