
Update on Ethical Matters – Quarter 1 of 2017/18 - Summary Report

Committee considering report: Governance and Ethics Committee on 21 August 2017

Portfolio Member: Cllr Keith Chopping

Date Portfolio Member agreed report: 03 August 2017

Report Author: Sarah Clarke

Forward Plan Ref: GE3255

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide an update on local and national issues relating to ethical standards and to bring to the attention of the Committee any complaints or other problems within West Berkshire.

2. Recommendation

2.1 Members of the Governance and Ethics Committee are asked to note the report.

3. Implications

3.1 **Financial:** There are no financial issues arising from this report. All costs associated with the investigation of complaints are met from within existing budgets.

3.2 **Policy:** Revised policy and changes to processes adopted at Council in May 2012 and reviewed in December 2013 and September 2016.

3.3 **Personnel:** There are no personnel issues associated with this report.

3.4 **Legal:** There are no legal issues arising from this report. The matters covered by this report are generally requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 in so far as appropriate and the Localism Act 2011 and its supporting regulations.

3.5 **Risk Management:** The benefits of this process are the maintenance of the Council's credibility and good governance by a high standard of ethical behaviour. The threats are the loss of credibility of the Council if standards fall.

3.6 **Property:** There are no property issues associated with this report.

3.7 **Other:** A diminution in standards of behaviour by elected Members could have a significant reputational impact on the Council

4. Other options considered

4.1 None

Executive Summary

5. Introduction / Background

- 5.1 Following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 it was agreed that quarterly reports would be provided to the Governance and Ethics Committee. This report sets out the number and nature of standards complaints received, progress made with complaints submitted and highlights any areas where training or other action might avoid further complaints in the future. It also sets out any progress made with changes to policies and procedures associated with the Code of Conduct.

6. Proposal

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report.

7. Key Issues Identified in the report:

- 7.1 During Quarter 1 of 2017/18 one formal complaint (NPC3/17) was received by the Monitoring Officer. No further action was taken on the complaint.
- 7.2 There is one outstanding complaint (NPC1/17) that is still being investigated
- 7.3 No dispensations were granted during Quarter 1 of 2017/18.
- 7.4 No gifts and hospitality have been declared by District Councillors during Quarter 1 of 2017/18. Officers will need to send Members a reminder of the need to make these declarations
- 7.5 Parish and Town Council's have submitted a number of Register of Interest Forms where they have elected a new Chairman or Vice-Chairman or co-opted new Parish Councillors.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The number of complaints received in respect of alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct remains low, which indicates that standards of ethical conduct remain generally high across West Berkshire at both District and at Parish / Town Council levels.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix A – Supporting Information