

Item 7 (d) - Monitoring Officer's Annual Report.

The attached report was considered by the Standards Committee, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Standards Committee (Minute 4, 14 January 2020)

Members considered the fifteenth annual report of the Monitoring Officer, which set out the work of the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee. The report also updated Members on the governance arrangements monitored by other committees and as such provided information on the ethical standards set by the Council. It was intended to promote Member and public confidence in the Council's governance framework and standards regime. Within the report was the breakdown of the complaints he had received from January to December 2019. Members were advised that a complaint had come in during the latter part of December and was not included in the figures.

The Monitoring Officer set out the procedure for dealing with complaints and gave examples of complaints that could be received. It was explained that Members on the Committee would only get involved with a complaint if the complaint went to a Hearing. There was no power to suspend a Member who had broken the Code of Conduct, but if a complaint was of a criminal nature this would be referred to the Police and the Monitoring Officer's role would be to facilitate their investigations. Members were advised that there were separate procedures for Officers of the Council as staff also had a code of conduct to comply with. This would be circulated to the Committee.

Action 1: For Monitoring Officer to circulate the Officer's Code of Conduct.

Members discussed the Local Government Ethical Standards review which was included within the agenda. The Committee on Standards in Public Life had reported 26 recommendations, of which 21 were the responsibility of national government. The Local Government Association was noted as responsible for two further recommendations and political groups for one. The remaining recommendation applied to local authorities and Government which was to provide legal indemnity to Independent Persons if their views or advice was disclosed. Members further discussed the recommendation for formal inductions.

In response to questions the Monitoring Officer advised that if a declaration of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest had been made regarding a planning application then the Member should remove themselves from the room for the discussion of the item. It was the sole responsibility of the person who made the declaration to excuse themselves. The Monitoring Officer expressed his thanks to Members for keeping their Pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest forms up to date.

Resolved: That the report be noted and it be recommended to Council that the report be noted.