

Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer to the Standards and Conduct Committee

Date: 8th March 2024

Report of: City Solicitor

Report to: Standards and Conduct Committee

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

This Annual Report to the Standards and Conduct Committee summarises the work carried out by the Monitoring Officer and her staff in relation to standards and conduct matters throughout the year.

Recommendations

- a) Members are asked to consider the matters set out in the Monitoring Officer's Annual report.

Why is the report being put forward?

- 1 The report from the Monitoring Officer is attached at Appendix 1 and provides assurances in respect of work undertaken to;
 - Ensure registers of interests and dispensations were correctly administered.
 - Deal with any sensitive interests.
 - Assess and respond to complaints.
 - Appoint an additional Independent Person
 - Support Parish and Town Councils.

What impact will this report have?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 2 The Council's ethical framework for elected members is a key component of the Council's Values and Behaviours; of being open, honest and trusted and treating people fairly.
- 3 Our Local Code of Corporate Governance commits the Council to have clear and enforced Codes of Conduct for Members.
- 4 The work undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and her staff, and by this committee, ensures that these arrangements remain up to date and fit for purpose and that the risk of failure to act in accordance with statutory requirements is minimised.

- 5 In relation to complaints against councillors, the Monitoring Officer does not consider that there are any adverse trends in the types of complaints received, and as no potential breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct have been revealed, there are no issues to address through additional training.
- 6 In managing risks to Members' personal safety, the Monitoring Officer has continued the arrangements whereby permission has been granted for Members' Home addresses to be withheld from the Public Register of Interests.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 7 This year the Monitoring Officer's report contains no changes to the process for handling Code of Conduct Complaints.
- 8 In relation to complaints against Councillors, in all cases referred to in the Monitoring Officer's report: -
 - a) The subject member was informed of the complaint and invited to provide information to assist in the assessment of it.
 - b) The Independent Person was consulted and invited to comment in advance of all Assessments being completed.
 - c) the Complainant was contacted, and an explanation provided as to the outcome of their complaint.

What are the resource implications?

- 9 There are no resource implications arising from this report the Monitoring Officer advises that she is satisfied with both the capacity and resilience of resources available.

What are the legal implications?

- 10 The Localism Act 2011 places a duty on the Council to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst Members and co-opted Members of the authority.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 11 The arrangements described within this report provide assurance that the authority, parish and town councils, individual councillors and the Monitoring Officer are complying with the requirements set out in the Localism Act 2011.

Does this report support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 12 Having a well-functioning ethical framework helps maintain confidence in the governance arrangements of the authority and thereby of the Council's objectives.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 13 This a factual report detailing the operation of the ethical framework in place at Leeds City Council.

How will success be measured?

- 14 The Monitoring Officer will continue to ensure that arrangements are in place for the registration and declaration of Interests and gifts and hospitality. The Monitoring Officer will also support the Council in its duty to adopt and keep under review a Code of Conduct.
- 15 The Monitoring Officer will support all elected Members in complying with their statutory obligations relating to the registration and declaration of interests and any application for, and use of, dispensations.

What is the timetable for implementation?

- 16 Other than statutory requirements on relating to the registration of interests there are no required timescales for implementation.

Appendices

- 17 Appendix 1 Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer

Background papers

- 18 None.