

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Governance	Governance Committee	22 January 2020

STANDARDS 2019 REVIEW

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To update members of the Committee on activities undertaken in relation to Standards and the code of conduct in 2019.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That the content of the report be noted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- Each year, the Committee review activity undertaken in relation to the standards matters and the code of conduct. Considering complaints received, changes to the code of conduct and their impact and any other relevant factors. This provides the Committee with confirmation that behaviour and probity in decision making is taken seriously by Chorley Council

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	

BACKGROUND

- Chorley Council not only have a code of conduct for members and are responsible for its application, we also have the responsibility to receive complaints against parish councillors within our borough boundaries. We also support parish councils and their clerks in matters of standards of behaviour.

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

- Following a review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Local Government Ethic Standards, the Governance Committee undertook a detailed review of both the code of conduct and the processes in place for receiving and considering complaints. A working group considered the recommendations of the report in detail, and supported by the Independent Person resolved to adopt the best practice recommendations where required.

This was supported by Full Council with the new code of conduct and associated procedures being adopted.

7. As a consequence of one of the adoption of one of the recommendations a recruitment exercise was undertaken and a second Independent Person has been appointed to the role in accordance with best practice. This assists in preventing any single appointee losing their independence by becoming overly familiar with members or the council environment.

TRAINING

8. Training was provided to all new members and was offered to all existing members of the council. This was well received with positive feedback being given both from newly elected and established councillors.
9. A session was also provided to Parish Clerks at the liaison meeting which concentrated particularly on the changes to best practice brought forward by the report. The working groups consideration of the proposals was also shared with clerks.

COMPLAINTS

10. There have been no complaints about the conduct of Chorley Council councillors this year.
11. Two complaints have been received about Parish Councillors. The first related to a matter where the conduct whilst likely to be a breach of the code, was undertaken when not acting as a councillor. The complaint itself suggested that the act was performed by a volunteer group of which this councillor was a part. Whilst best practice is to provide an presumption that the subject of the complaint was acting as a councillor at the time, this is a rebuttable presumption.
12. The second complaint is ongoing as the complainant has brought further matters to the Monitoring Officers attention to support the allegations.
13. The volume of complaints received does not suggest there are any standards issues within Chorley, although this should not mean the council should be complacent.

FUTURE PLANNING

14. It is not expected there will be any significant national changes to the code of conduct in the next 12 months however there are some local factors which will need to be planned for.
15. From December 2019, Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council have a shared Monitoring Officer. It is proposed therefore to align where appropriate the codes of conduct and processes. This is not perceived to have a significant impact for either council as the codes of conduct are already very similar.
16. It should also be noted that in May this year, the council will be having all out elections with a number of experienced councillors indicating they will not be standing for election. This is likely to mean a higher than usual number of new councillors being elected. The Monitoring Officer is working with Democratic Services on the induction for these new members to ensure that they are properly trained on the code of conduct.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

17. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	X	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

18. Risk is identified in the body of the report where appropriate.

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

19. None.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

20. Contained in the body of the report

CHRIS MOISTER
MONITORING OFFICER

Report Author	Ext	Date
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