

By: Benjamin Watts - Monitoring Officer
To: Standards Committee –13 November 2019
Subject: Monitoring Officer's Update
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report sets out an update from the Monitoring Officer to the Standards Committee.

1 Introduction

- (1) The County Council on 19 July 2012 adopted a new standards regime as required by the Localism Act 2011 and established a Standards Committee with the Terms of Reference set out in the Constitution.

2 Kent Code of Conduct for Members

- (1) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the County Council on 12 December 2013 following consideration and recommendation by the Standards Committee.
- (2) I can confirm that all Members elected to the County Council, signed Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) forms within 28 days of becoming a Member of KCC. These forms should be updated by Members within 28 days of a change to their DPI. All DPI forms are uploaded onto each Member's KCC webpage and are available for public inspection.
- (3) Other Significant Interests (OSI) declared by Members at meetings are recorded in the minutes for that meeting.

Operation of Code of Conduct

- (4) A function of this Committee is to receive, monitor and assess the operation and effectiveness of the arrangements for dealing with Member Code of Conduct Complaints.
- (5) An overview of the Complaints received since the last meeting of the Committee and the outcome or progress to date will be circulated at the meeting.

Registration of Gifts and Hospitality

- (6) As part of the Code of Conduct Training Elected Members are made aware of the requirement under the Code to notify the Monitoring Officer of any gift, benefit or hospitality with an estimated value, or annual cumulative

value of £100 or more received and accepted in their role as an Elected Member. This notification must be made within 28 days of receipt of the gift or hospitality.

- (7) The notification is made on a standard form which is then published on each individual Member's KCC webpage and available for public inspection. Currently 16 Members have submitted such a notification. I have no reason to believe that there are any other notifications required which have not been submitted, but of course the onus is on Elected Members to comply with this requirement.

Committee on Standards in Public Life

- (8) Members have previously discussed the review into Local Government Ethical Standards conducted by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL). According to a recent Written Answer, "The government is currently carefully considering the Committee's recommendations and will issue a response in due course."¹
- (9) Recommendation 1 of the CSPL review was: "The Local Government Association should create an updated model code of conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government."
- (10) In line with this recommendation, the Local Government Association (LGA) is currently reviewing and updating the member model code of conduct. The LGA intends to hold an 8-week consultation on the draft model code next year. The outcome of the consultation and a draft final model will then be presented to the LGA Leadership Board. It was also be put forward to the LGA General Assembly (as part of their annual conference) in July 2020 for adoption.

Member Standards

- (11) I will update the Committee verbally on any Members Standards matters that can be considered in open session.

6 Recommendation:

To note and comment on the update and the actions taken by the Monitoring Officer in dealing with complaints.

Background Documents

"Local Government Ethical Standards" by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, January 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-ethical-standards-report>

¹ PQ 1052, 25 October 2019, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-questions-answers/?page=1&max=20&questiontype=AllQuestions&house=commons%2Clords&uin=1052>

“Civility in public life and the review of the model code of conduct” by the Local Government Association,
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/191003%20public%20document%20on%20civility%20in%20public%20life%20%28Autosaved%29.pdf>

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