

Report to:	Standards Committee
Relevant Officer:	Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships / Monitoring Officer
Date of Meeting:	19 July 2016

STANDARDS UPDATE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider an update report from the Monitoring Officer on standards issues raised to date under the standards framework.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To consider the update report and note the issues raised to date.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To make Standards Committee members aware of the type of issues raised.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None. This is an update report.

4.0 Council Priority:

- 4.1 This report covers all of the Council's priorities.

5.0 Background Information

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer has been appointed as Proper Officer to receive allegations of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct regarding elected members and co-opted members. The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority, after consultation with an

Independent Person, to determine whether an allegation of a member's misconduct requires investigation and to arrange such an investigation.

5.2 However, the Monitoring Officer should seek resolution of complaints without formal investigation wherever practicable and he has the discretion to refer matters to the Standards Committee where he feels it is inappropriate to take a decision on a referral for investigation. He should also periodically prepare reports for the Standards Committee on the discharge of this function.

5.3 It should be noted that there are a number of stages in dealing with reported matters. Some matters are brought to the attention of the Monitoring Officer without merit. In instances where a breach may have been considered to arise and in line with agreed procedures, wherever possible the Monitoring Officer should seek the resolution of complaints without the need for formal investigation. Periodic reports to the Standards Committee show all the matters which have been brought to the attention of the Monitoring Officer for review in order that members of the Standards Committee have an appreciation of all matters arising.

5.4 **Update on standards issues raised**

The schedule below sets out the issues raised on a category basis since the last report to Committee in June 2015.

September 2015

Treating others with respect / bringing office into disrepute - one initial assessment and an informal resolution was agreed with a councillor. Advice was also given about the code of conduct.

October 2015

Not a Code of Conduct issue - a number of co-ordinated referrals about two councillors and their alleged lack of responding to correspondence. On closer inspection of the issues raised with the two councillors, these had been responded to but not to the satisfaction of the complainants (in terms of an outcome). This was not deemed to be a code of conduct matter and a response was sent to the complainants and no action taken.

January 2016

Bringing office into disrepute – an initial assessment was undertaken with regard to an allegation regarding a councillor (including consultation with an independent person) and it was agreed that there was no code of conduct issue to answer and a note for the record was taken and no further action deemed necessary.

January 2016

Treating others with respect / bringing office into disrepute – an initial assessment was undertaken and an informal resolution (including letter of apology) was agreed with the complainant and subject member.

January 2016

Treating others with respect / bringing office into disrepute – an initial assessment was undertaken which found that an apology had been given at the incident. The subject member was advised about the code of conduct and their behaviour.

February 2016

Misuse of Council resources / use of position to confer an advantage – one matter looked into with regard to a councillor allegedly seeking to gain an advantage from their position. No foundation at all with the allegation. Not a code of conduct issue. No action taken.

March 2016

Declaration of interest / treating others with respect – a complaint regarding a councillor failing to declare an interest and an allegation about the behaviour of another councillor – both at the same meeting. An initial assessment was undertaken (including consultation with an independent person) and it was deemed that there was no interest to declare and the allegation regarding the behaviour of the other councillor was without foundation.

June/ July 2016

Bringing office into disrepute – a complaint was made regarding a councillor failing to report a matter to the relevant department. This matter is ongoing and is at the initial assessment phase.

5.5 **Joint Working Group on Standards Issues**

At the last meeting of the Committee, it was noted that the Joint Working Group on Standards issues which had been set up with the Fylde Borough councillors and the independent persons had a Blackpool councillor vacancy. Councillor Clapham was appointed to that vacancy. However, for a number of reasons including a change in the committee membership of Fylde councillors and the re advertising of the independent persons positions, that working group has not met since. The Monitoring Officer will update further at the meeting.

5.6 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.7 **List of Appendices:**

None

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None - the Council has a locally agreed procedure for dealing with allegations.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Yes – on relevant complaints, an independent person was consulted and advice sought.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Exempt.