

AGENDA ITEM_____

REPORT TO COUNCIL

11 SEPTEMBER 2013

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**LOCALISM ACT 2011 – THE NEW STANDARDS REGIME – REVIEW OF THE
COUNCIL’S LOCAL STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS**

SUMMARY

This report provides details of the review of the Authority’s local standards arrangements and asks Council to agree the review report, together with the recommendations from Cabinet as specified in this covering report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to Council that:-

1. The review report is considered and agreed.
2. No changes are made to the Council’s code of conduct for members.
3. Appropriate advice, guidance and training continues to be provided in connection with the code.
4. Proposals to update the descriptions of the principles of conduct in the preamble to the code, in light of the revisions to the descriptions of the Nolan principles, are the subject of further reports to Cabinet and to Council
5. The arrangements for dealing with member misconduct complaints remain as originally approved by Council.
6. The appointment of Norman Rollo, as Independent Person, and Mike Hill and Jeff Bell as reserve Independent Persons, be reaffirmed, and that their terms of office be extended with effect from 30 September 2013 for a period up to 7 July 2015, in accordance with the recommendations of the Standards (Independent Persons) Appointment Panel.
7. Regular reminders, advice and guidance continue to be provided to Stockton’s members and to the members of Town/Parish Councils in Stockton’s area regarding the need to submit and keep up to date their registrable interests.
8. The procedures relating to the disclosure of interests and withdrawal from meetings; sensitive interests and dispensations, be reaffirmed.
9. Further training regarding the code of conduct, disclosable pecuniary interests and the arrangements for dealing with allegations of member misconduct be provided as and when required or considered appropriate.

10. The Monitoring Officer reviews the Council's standards arrangements again after a further 12 months of operation, and that the outcome with any recommendations for change is reported back to the Audit Committee, Cabinet and Council for consideration.

DETAIL

1. The Council's local standards arrangements were approved on 7 March 2012. Council then agreed a new code of conduct for members on 18 July 2012. Further details about the arrangements and the code can be found in the related reports, which are accessible at www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att16964.doc and at www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att17926.doc
2. It was agreed that the new standards arrangements and code would be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer after 12 months of operation.
3. A copy of the report from the Monitoring Officer regarding this review is attached at **Appendix 1**.
4. This was considered by Cabinet on 4 September 2013. The report to Cabinet is accessible at www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/
5. The relevant Cabinet minute is attached at **Appendix 2**. Cabinet's recommendations to Council are set out in this covering report.
6. Council is asked to agree the Monitoring Officer's review report and the related recommendations from Cabinet.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

7. Savings have been achieved by not retaining a standing Standards Committee. The cost of providing advice, guidance and training are met from existing budgets. Any costs arising from the proposed recommendations will also continue to be met from the same budgets.

Legal

8. The Council's Local standards arrangements are compliant with the requirements of the Act.

RISK ASSESSMENT

9. Taking into account the first 12 months of operation of the new arrangements, potential breaches of the code can continue to be assessed as a low to medium risk. The measures in place to control the risk appear to be proving to be effective.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

10. High standards of conduct are critical to the Council's governance and organisational development.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

11. It is not considered that an assessment is required. No changes are proposed to the Council's standards arrangements or to the code of conduct for members.

CONSULTATION

12. Consultation regarding the review has taken place with Members, Officers and with Town/Parish Councils through their clerks.

Director of Law & Democracy

Contact Officer: David E Bond

Telephone No: 01642 527060

E-mail: david.bond@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not ward specific

Property Implications:

Not applicable