

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**28 OCTOBER 2015**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**LOCALISM ACT 2011 (“THE 2011 ACT”) – REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL’S LOCAL  
STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS**

**SUMMARY**

The report provides details of the latest review of the Council’s local standards arrangements.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:-

1. The report regarding the review of the Council’s local standards arrangements be considered; and as the report recommends that,
2. No changes are made to the principles of conduct or the Council’s code of conduct for Members;
3. Awareness continues to be maintained, and that appropriate advice, guidance and training continues to be provided, in connection with the general principles and the code;
4. The Council’s Confidential Information protocol is re-issued and re-circulated to all Members, in order to highlight the arrangements and requirements regarding exempt and confidential information;
5. Copies of the letters (about standards of conduct) previously sent to the Planning Committee are re-circulated to all of the current Members of the Committee;
6. Members continue to be reminded of the importance of complying with the law, and the significant risk of not doing so, when using social media, or any other forms of electronic communication.
7. The arrangements for dealing with member misconduct complaints remain unchanged, and as originally approved by Council;
8. All Council Members take appropriate action to ensure that their register of interests details have been submitted and are kept up to date;

9. Regular reminders, advice and guidance continue to be provided to Stockton's Members and to the members of the borough's Town/Parish Councils, regarding the need to submit and keep their registerable interests up to date;
10. The procedures relating to the disclosures of interests at, and withdrawal from the Council's meetings be reaffirmed;
11. Appropriate and timely advice regarding those procedures is made available to all members when required;
12. The documentation (protocol and application form) and procedure regarding dispensation applications and determinations is reaffirmed and re-circulated again to all Members;
13. Guidance and/or briefings regarding any aspects of the Council's standards arrangements is provided to individual Members or their Groups if required, on request;
14. The guidance for Members regarding gifts and hospitality is reviewed and re-circulated; and that
15. The Council's standards arrangements are reviewed again during the 2017/18 municipal year.

## **DETAIL**

### **Background**

1. Council agreed new standards arrangements under the 2011 Act, on the 7 March 2012.
2. Subsequently, on 18 July 2012 Council approved a new code of conduct for Members.
3. It was agreed that these new arrangements should be reviewed after 12 months of operation.
4. A review was carried out, and reported to Council on 11 September 2013. Amongst other matters, Council agreed that a further review should take place after another 12 months operation, and that the outcome, with any recommendations, should be reported to the Audit Committee, Cabinet and to Council.

### **Further Review**

5. A report regarding the latest review of the Authority's local standards arrangements is attached at **Appendix 1**.
6. The Audit Committee considered the review outcomes on the 28 September 2015 and the Committee's views were reported to Cabinet. In particular the Committee emphasized that the review recommendations should relate to all Members and not just for instance Planning Committee Members (recommendation 5) or new members.

7. Cabinet considered the matter at its meeting on the 8 October 2015 and approved the recommendations. Details of Cabinet's decision are attached at **Appendix 2**.
8. Council is asked to consider the review report and the recommendations arising from it.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial**

9. Any costs arising will be met from existing budgets.

### **Legal**

10. The purpose of the Council's arrangements, and the review and its recommendations, is to demonstrate continuing compliance with the requirements of the 2011 Act regarding the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

11. Failure to comply with this duty is considered to be a low to medium risk. There are measures in place to ameliorate the risk, not least the Council's local standards arrangements and the monitoring and reassessment of those arrangements on a regular basis.

## **COUNCIL PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

12. Organisational and operational effectiveness through good governance and strong local democracy.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

13. No assessment is considered necessary.

## **CONSULTATION**

14. Officers and Members (including the Audit Committee and Cabinet) have been consulted in order to inform the review and its outcomes, as have the Council's Independent Persons and Town/Parish Clerks/Councils.

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<u>Background Papers:</u>	the appendices
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward Specific
<u>Property Implications:</u>	N/A