

A meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** will be held in **THE CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2016** at **4:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact
(01480)**

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2015.

**A Roberts
388015**

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary or other interests in relation to any Agenda Item. See Notes below.

3. COMPLAINTS POLICY AND GUIDANCE (Pages 7 - 20)

To consider a report by the Corporate Team Manager on a proposed new policy and guidance on customer feedback.

**A Dobbyne
388100
L Sboui
388032**

4. THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND THE REGISTER OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (Pages 21 - 28)

To consider a report by the Members' Support Assistant on the Code of Conduct and the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

**L Jablonska
388004**

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE (Pages 29 - 32)

To consider a report by the Monitoring Officer on the appointment of the Lead and Deputy Independent Persons and of Parish Council representatives.

**A Roberts
388015**

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 30th June 2016 at 4.00pm in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House.

Dated this 24 day of February 2016



Head of Paid Service

Notes

1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

- (1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*
- (2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it -*
 - (a) *relates to you, or*
 - (b) *is an interest of -*
 - (i) *your spouse or civil partner; or*
 - (ii) *a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*
 - (iii) *a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

and you are aware that the other person has the interest.
- (3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*
 - (a) *any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;*
 - (b) *any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*
 - (c) *any current contracts with the Council;*
 - (d) *any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*
 - (e) *any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*
 - (f) *any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*
 - (g) *a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests

- (4) *If a Member has a non-statutory disclosable interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote providing you do not breach the overall Nolan principles.*
- (5) *A Member has a non-statutory disclosable interest where -*
 - (a) *a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or*
 - (b) *it relates to or is likely to affect a disclosable pecuniary interest, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association, or*
 - (c) *it relates to or is likely to affect any body –*
 - (i) *exercising functions of a public nature; or*
 - (ii) *directed to charitable purposes; or*
 - (iii) *one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a Member or in a position of control or management.*

and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

2. Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings

The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are

open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening at meetings. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and available via the following link [filming, photography and recording at council meetings.pdf](#) or on request from the Democratic Services Team. The Council understands that some members of the public attending its meetings may not wish to be filmed. The Chairman of the meeting will facilitate this preference by ensuring that any such request not to be recorded is respected.

Please contact Anthony Roberts, Democratic Services Team, Tel No. 01480 388015/e-mail: Anthony.Roberts@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (*under Councils and Democracy*).

If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Elections & Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in the Civic Suite 0.1B, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 8 December 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor K M Baker – Vice-Chairman in the Chair

Councillors Mrs L A Duffy, D A Giles and J E White and Mr P McClosky

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, A Hansard, R Harrison and M F Shellens

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Baker, Mrs G Holmes and Mrs D Townsend

27. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th September 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

29. THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND THE REGISTER OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

By means of a report by the Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee was updated on the adoption of a Code of Conduct by Town and Parish Councils and the receipt and publication of register of interests forms on behalf of District and Town and Parish Councillors. Members were reminded that the Monitoring Officer had a duty to establish and maintain a register of disclosable pecuniary interests. They noted that all of the 71 Town and Parish Councils had adopted a Code of Conduct, with 56 based on that adopted by the District Council, 11 had opted for the Code promoted by the National Association of Local Councils and the remaining four Councils had adopted their own version of the Code. They were of the view that this represented a considerable improvement on the position a year ago.

Members were then informed that, of the 71 Town and Parish Councils, 61 had their full Register published, which comprised the Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) forms of all Councillors. Clerks from the remaining 10 Parish Councils had been reminded to send in outstanding DPI forms as soon as possible.

In terms of individual DPIs, 592 of a total of 650 had been received

from Parish Councillors, 22 were outstanding and 36 were vacancies. The forms of all District Councillors had been published.

The Committee considered how to ensure the outstanding DPIs were received. Given the improvement in return rates, it was considered that the Monitoring Officer should write directly to parish Councillors who had not returned DPIs before more proactive measures were considered. It also was suggested that the documentation Councillors received after they had been elected should be reviewed to ensure it made clear what their responsibilities were in this respect.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

30. ELECTION FREQUENCY

The Committee gave consideration to a report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing the responses submitted during consultation of the Council's election frequency. Members were reminded that the consultation had been undertaken as part of the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) of the Council's electoral arrangements.

Members noted that, in total, 75 responses have been received. Opinion was equally split on whether to keep to annual elections or change to holding elections every four years.

Mrs D Townsend commented that, in the absence of more detailed information and of the financial implications, it was difficult for town and parish councils to form a view. Financial information was needed as they were planning their budgets.

Members recognised there were strong arguments to support either method of selecting Councillors. Their attention was drawn to the fact that the Council had submitted a proposal to the LGBCE to continue with 52 Councillors and that the LGBCE usually expected Councils that held elections every year to have a number of councillors, which was divisible by three so there was an election in every multi-member ward every year. However, on the grounds that it promoted continuity in the Membership, the Committee;

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended not to resolve to move to all-out elections, thus retaining a pattern of electing by thirds.

31. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on 3rd March 2016 in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon.

Chairman

Public *

Key Decision - No*

* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Complaints Policy and Guidance

Meeting/Date: Standards Committee – 3 March 2016

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Darren Tysoe – Executive Councillor for Customer Services

Report by: Adrian Dobbyne, Corporate Team Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The Complaints Policy and Guidance has been reviewed but seen in a wider context of customer feedback to include suggestions and compliments. A stronger connection has been made to the Customer Services Strategy. The new policy is embedded into the Strategy and the Guidance updated to reflect this and to adopt a more flexible approach to managing feedback. Within complaints management, it enables a more immediate and less formal initial stage before operating a two stage formal process.

Recommendation(s):

Members are invited to comment on the proposed new policy and guidance on customer feedback.

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1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information on the updated Complaints Policy and Procedures.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the Corporate Team restructure in November 2014 responsibility for complaints was moved to a different service area within the Corporate Team. This provided an opportunity to take a fresh look at the complaints policy and internal processes currently being used for managing stage one and stage two complaints. The aims of the review were:

- to provide clarity of what is a complaint and when it should be recorded as a complaint
- to improve recording of stage one complaints
- to clarify responsibility for managing complaints
- to identify the level of independence required for stage two complaints
- to consider how we learn from complaints and how this is shared across the council.
- to consider how the council manages compliments and suggestions.

- 2.3 This report outlines the outcomes of this review

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 To simplify the policy, the guidance given in the Customer Services Strategy is the policy. This one pager at the back of the Strategy outlines what is to be treated as a compliment and complaint or is just a service failure and explains our standards in managing such feedback and confirms the customer recourse to the Local Government Ombudsman. There is no need for a separate and additional policy statement, although we will update pages on our website to supplement this information.

- 3.2 Consideration was given to the stages in the process in managing a complaint and who can undertake these stages. The guidance suggests that there is a first informal stage of trying to resolve any complaint. This enables an issue to be treated as a service failure but resolved more immediately (e.g. missed bin collection), which need not go through to any formal stage. A typical resolution could be for example to collect the missed bin or to contact the complainant and give a verbal explanation.

- 3.3 The guidance now has two formal stages. The first is for the Services to manage. This is usually to be the manager of the team responsible but allows for another manager to be asked to manage the complaint if more appropriate (e.g. nature of the complaint, leave arrangements etc.). Stage 1 is formal and requires a written response. This advises the complainant of their right to seek further redress if dissatisfied.

- 3.4 Stage 2 is usually to be managed by the Head of Service responsible but also allows the flexibility to appoint another independent senior manager if more appropriate. This flexibility means we are not tied to a particular resolution route and means that we are more likely to meet timeframes and allows a more independent route into managing the complaint, but does not restrict the management to be independent of the service. It enables flexibility to be used appropriately, both efficiently and effectively.

3.5 The review has confirmed the importance of managing other feedback such as suggestions and compliments. The Guidance sets out the expectation for managing this, confirming the importance of acknowledgement to the sender and also passing on as appropriate to the relevant members of staff. It will also supplement create a culture of recognising staff, which is a theme in the Employee Survey Action Plan.

3.6 The review also confirmed that we can learn valuable lessons for all feedback. The Guidance refers to how managers should record these lessons and that there will be as collation of these in order to inform the annual report on customer feedback.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS - HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

4.1 The management of customer feedback will supplement the principles of the Customer Services Strategy and should minimise the risk of the Council not managing feedback appropriately and enable lessons to be learnt from feedback to improve services.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 The new guidance and policy will take immediate effect.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

6.1 The policy links to the strategic priority of ensuring we are a customer focused and service led council.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The changes have been discussed with senior managers and has also been based on feedback received whilst managing the existing process.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The policy clarifies responsibilities of managing complaints, compliments and suggestions. The policy itself will not lead to an increase in the volume received, but it may lead to a shift in where the resource comes from to manage customer feedback.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (*Equalities, Environment, ICT, etc*)

10.1 The continuing monitoring and management of customer feedback through a corporate system and management will enable the council to review feedback in the context of equality.

11 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

11.1 The policy and guidance has been updated to support a more flexible approach to managing customer feedback so that we retain a thoroughness and corporate management of the process.

12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Customer Services Strategy (extract)

Appendix 2 - Customer Feedback Policy – Internal Guidance

CONTACT OFFICER

Adrian Dobbyne, Corporate Team Manager / Louise Sboui, Policy, Performance and Transformation Manager

Tel No.01480 388100 / 01480 388032

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Tell Us What You Think

We want to provide you with a good service, but you might want to suggest improvements, or you might want to compliment us on getting it right. Sometimes things do go wrong and you may want to complain or just tell us about your concerns.

Compliments

A compliment can be about a service, a team or a member of staff. We would like to hear about it if you have received excellent customer service for example, staff have been professional, clear and helpful explanations have been provided, or if you have been treated with friendliness and respect.

"Your staff member was very efficient and helpful and explained everything thoroughly to us. Thank you."

"I appreciate the communication skills of your staff. They explained everything clearly & easily. Thank you."

Compliments will be shared as good practice and in the training of new staff.

You can provide feedback online or telephone us 01480 388388 or talk to any of our staff.

Complaints

We want to hear if you have had a poor service; did not get a service at all; or you have been treated unfairly or unprofessionally. We encourage any customer who has a concern to first speak to a member of staff in the relevant service area. If the problem can be solved on the spot then there is no need for the issue to go through the formal complaints process. However if the complaint cannot be dealt with immediately, or you would like a formal response, you can request this via our website: www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk, by email: complaints@huntingdonshire.gov.uk, by phone: 01480 388388, or in person at one of our Customer Service Centres.

Complaints will be used to help us improve our services

The outcome from a Planning complaint will be used as part of a training session for planning officers to better understand the council's duties with respect to protected species.

The outcome from a waste collection complaint has resulted in greater consideration now being given to the particular circumstances for customer requests to move from sack to bin collections and will allow a more flexible interpretation of the Council's policy.

There are some situations that we wouldn't take through the complaints process, for example a single incident of a service failure such as one missed bin collection as we should be given the opportunity to put this right; or where there is a disagreement with the result of a process that has its own appeal process such as planning or benefit decisions and parking fines; or the conduct of a Councillor, these will be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer; and finally, some complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction with the Council or Government policy as opposed to the Council's failure to live up to service standards. The Council will do its best to explain the policy and the reasons for it.

We aim to:

- acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days;
- fully investigate and respond within 20 working days. If we are unable to meet this timescale we will write to you again to tell you what action we are taking and when you can expect a response.

Your complaint will be dealt with in confidence and will only be discussed with those who need to know. We will contact you by email or letter.

If however you are still unhappy, the complaint will be passed onto the next stage where it will be investigated by a senior officer or independent officer.

If you are still not satisfied, you have the right to take your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint until the Council has had an opportunity to investigate and answer it first.

We will monitor trends and performance in our handling of complaints and report to our Standards Committee on an annual basis.

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Customer Feedback Policy

Internal Guidance

1. INTRODUCTION

The District Council is committed to a constant review of and improvements to the delivery of the Council's services for all of our customers. We value customer feedback to help us maintain and improve our services. This note sets out the Council's Customer Feedback Policy for suggestions, compliments and complaints. It supplements the Customer Service Strategy published January 2016. Included in that Strategy is the guidance on how to raise a complaint and give compliment.

2. AIMS

All suggestions, compliments and complaints are helpful for us to improve our services. Customers will be encouraged to provide feedback in person, in writing, by e-mail, by telephone or via the website. Customers will be advised of our response targets for responding to feedback.

3. PUBLICITY

Customers will be encouraged to provide feedback and information on how they can do this will be publicised:-

- In the Council's Customer Service Centre and customer service outlets, including Leisure Centres
- In Libraries
- In Citizens Advice Bureau
- On our website

4. DEFINITIONS

What is a suggestion?

A suggestion is made when a customer gives us feedback on how we can improve our delivery of a service or procedure.

What is a compliment?

A customer gives a compliment when he/she provides us with feedback about how well we deliver a service or how helpful an employee has been to them.

What is a complaint?

A complaint should not be defined too narrowly. It is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether justified or not and whether the action or service was taken or provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

The definition could include, but is not limited to, any one of the following situations for our customers:-

- A delay in providing a service
- Failure to provide a service, achieve the Council's published service standards or fulfil statutory responsibilities

- A poor quality service or a mistake has been made
- An inappropriate service
- A service has been removed or withdrawn
- An inappropriate cost has been charged for a service
- An employee's behaviour causes upset
- A policy unreasonably disadvantages one or more members of the public
- Unfair or bias discrimination

Comments which are criticisms or disagreements with Council policies rather than the way they have been carried out should not be regarded as a complaint.

5. HOW TO DEAL WITH A SUGGESTION

Details of the suggestion should be logged by the relevant service who should acknowledge receipt of the customer's comments within five working days. The Head of Service / Manager should consider the suggestion and send a response within 20 working days to:

- Thank the customer for taking an interest in our services
- Explain to the customer how we will implement their suggestion or explain why we are unable to do so.

6. HOW TO DEAL WITH A COMPLIMENT

Details of the compliment should be logged by the relevant service who should acknowledge receipt of the customer's comments within five working days. The Head of Service / Manager will inform the employee and/or the team to:

- Advise them of the compliment
- Thank them for providing a high quality service to the customer

7. HOW TO DEAL WITH A COMPLAINT

The principles that underpin the complaints procedure are that:

- The customer is the most important person in any transaction and has a right to decent, agreed standards of service and care
- Customers should have easy access to clear information
- Both the customer and the Council should have a clear understanding of what is expected from each other
- Systems of redress and compensation should be clearly explained and understood
- Services should learn from the complaints received and make sure that this learning influences delivery next time
- The identity of the person making a complaint should be made known only to those who need to consider the complaint and should not be revealed to any other person or made public

Care should be taken to maintain confidentiality where particular circumstances demand it.

There are some situations that we wouldn't take through the complaints process, for example a single incident of a service failure such as one missed bin collection, as we should be given the opportunity to put this right; or where there is a disagreement with the result of a process that has its own appeal process such as planning or benefits decisions and parking fines.

7.1 Initial Stage – Service Resolution

The employee or service provider who receives the complaint initially should make every effort to resolve the problem straight away. If a complainant remains dissatisfied or feels that his/her problem has not been looked at properly, or not been fully understood, they will often want someone else to investigate it further. In this situation, the customer should be informed that they can progress the complaint to the next stage.

7.2 Stage 1 – Service Investigation

If a customer says he/she wishes to make a formal complaint the employee should give the customer the options of:

- a. Making the complaint in writing
- b. Submitting the complaint electronically via:
<https://applications.huntsdc.gov.uk/forms/complaints/complaints.htm>
- c. Taking details of the complaint in person or over the telephone

If c. is chosen, employees should take down the following information:

- a. Complainant's details
- b. Complaint details
- c. What action the customer has already taken
- d. What resolution the customer is expecting
- e. In what form the customer would prefer the response

In all cases the information should then be entered onto the Customer Feedback System on SharePoint.

7.3 Who?

This should be dealt with by the relevant Manager or Investigating Officer nominated by the Head of Service in the service area that the complaint is within. It may or may not be the Manager who was involved at the local resolution stage.

7.4 How?

Acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible and in any event within five working days. Advise the complainant that unless there are exceptional circumstances they will receive a written response within 20 working days.

The entry on the Customer Feedback SharePoint site should be completed.

Investigate the complaint, consider the response including any remedy, and write to the complainant within the maximum of 20 working days. If after appropriate investigation the complaint is considered not justified, inform the complainant accordingly. At this stage advise the complainant that they should write or contact the Policy, Performance and Transformation Manager if they wish to pursue the complaint further (see Stage 2).

If this timescale is unable to be met, write to the complainant and tell them why, what action is being taken and when a substantive response can be expected.

The complaint remains open for a period of 30 working days to make sure that the customer is satisfied with the response. Advise the complainant that they have 30 working days from

receipt of the response to take the complaint to the next stage. Following this timescale the complaint will be closed.

7.5 Stage 2 – Head of Service or Independent Manager

7.6 Who?

This should be investigated by the relevant Head of Service. It could be appropriate to be managed by another member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) or Management Team, who is independent of the service area to which the complaint relates. In such circumstances, this is decided by the Corporate Team Manager.

7.7 How?

Acknowledge the complaint within five working days and advise the complainant that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, he/she will receive a written response within 20 working days.

The entry on the Customer Feedback SharePoint site should be completed.

Investigate and consider the response to the complainant including any remedy and write to the complainant, telling them why, what action is being taken and when a substantive response can be expected.

Inform the customer that the complaint has been fully addressed through the Council's internal complaints procedure and will not be pursued further by the Council.

Advise the customer of their right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman or to obtain their own independent legal advice if they remain dissatisfied with our response.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

The Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint until the Council has had an opportunity to investigate and answer it first.

Complaints involving the Ombudsman will be dealt with by the Corporate Team Manager and Policy, Performance and Transformation Manager on behalf of the Managing Director.

9. PERSISTENT, VEXATIOUS AND / OR UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANTS

We will respond sympathetically and patiently to the needs of all complainants, but sometimes we may be unable to do any more to assist them, or to resolve a real or perceived problem. If a complainant is persistently contacting the Council with regard to a complaint, long after the point where a conclusion can be reached to the complainants' satisfaction, refer to the Management of Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour Policy. The two stages of the complaints procedure will need to have been completed before the Management of Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour Policy is invoked. Further advice should be sought from the Corporate Team Manager.

10. REMEDIES

Where a complaint is found to be justified, consideration needs to be given to an appropriate remedy to the complaint. We will try to take some practical action to put things right and will always, as far as possible, put the customer back to the position that he/she would have been in if it wasn't for our mistake.

One or more of the following may need to be done to put things right:

- Apologise to the customer
- Provide an explanation and information to the customer
- Provide a service desired by the customer
- Review customer information (leaflets, posters etc.)
- Review of working procedures
- Request to review a policy
- Arrange training or guidance for employees
- Financial compensation in exceptional circumstances

11. SERVICE FEEDBACK OFFICER

A consideration to be resolved is if through this Policy we require the designation in each Service of a Feedback Officer(s). They will need to make sure that all staff are aware of the procedure for dealing with feedback and that feedback forms are displayed in public areas. The Service Feedback Officers' role will be to record all suggestions, compliments and complaints and ensure all information is passed on for corporate monitoring through the correct channels. For the purposes of monitoring referred to in Section 12, only those complaints that reach stage 1 of the complaints procedure will be regarded as formal complaints and these all must be recorded on SharePoint.

12. MONITORING

We will monitor trends and performance in our handling of customer feedback and produce reports to the Corporate Governance Panel on a quarterly basis.

13. SHAREPOINT

The Council operates a Customer Feedback System on SharePoint. All action in relation to formal complaints (Stages 1 and 2) should be entered on to the system.

Public
Key Decision - No*
* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Update on Code of Conduct and Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Meeting/Date: Standards Committee – 3 March 2016

Executive Portfolio:

Report by: Beverley Morrison, Members' Support Assistant

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

The Monitoring Officer has a duty to establish and maintain a register of disclosable pecuniary interests and this report provides the Committee with an update on the current level of returns and to consider any action that might be necessary to encourage those Councils who continue to fail to return their forms to comply.

Recommendation(s):

The Committee is requested to consider and comment on the report.

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?

- 1.1 Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of Members of the District Council and also continues to be responsible for maintaining the Register for Parish Councils. The register has to be open for inspection at the District Council's Offices and published on the District Council's website. Where a Parish Council has a website, the District Council is also required to provide that Council with the information necessary to enable it to publish their current register on its own website. Information in respect of the DPIs of each Parish Council is presented in the Appendix to this report.
- 1.2 Each Parish Council also has a duty to adopt a Code of Conduct. All Town and Parish Councils were requested to advise the Monitoring Officer when their Council had adopted a new Code and to confirm whether it was identical to that adopted and promoted by the District Council or alternatively the version produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) or any other.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Committee is responsible for maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of the District and Town and Parish Councils, for monitoring operation of the Code of Conduct and for considering the outcome of investigations in the event of breaches of the Code. The District Council has a duty to maintain and publish the Registers of Pecuniary Interests of both the District and Town and Parish Councils. Those Members who fail to comply with the 2011 Act are guilty of an offence and liable to a maximum fine of £5,000 and disqualification for up to 5 years.
- 2.2 This report describes the current position in relation to both of these matters.

3. ANALYSIS/REPORT

- 3.1 The DPI forms that have been received have been published. Any changes made to pecuniary interests also have been published.
- 3.2 Of 71 Town and Parish Councils, 66 have had their full Register published on the District Council's website. Clerks from the remaining 5 Parish Councils have been reminded to send in outstanding DPI forms as soon as possible.
- 3.3 In terms of individual DPIs, 605 out of a total of 650 have been received from Parish Councillors; 4 are outstanding and 41 are vacant. The up to date position on each Council is noted in Appendix 1. The Committee will appreciate that it is unlikely that there will ever be a complete return at any one time because of ever changing nature of the system.
- 3.4 All District Councillors' DPI forms are loaded onto the Council's website.

4. KEY IMPACTS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1 The Member Support Assistant continues to pursue those Parish Councils where DPIs are still outstanding. Similarly, incomplete or inaccurate forms are returned to Parish Councils with a request to revise and return.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

- 5.1 Parish Clerks have been contacted by email to submit DPI forms as soon as possible. The situation will be monitored.
- 5.2 The Committee may recall that they had suggested, at a previous meeting, that they or the Chairman should give notice of their intention to visit meetings of the Parish Councils where DPIs are outstanding to explain how important it was for their Members to complete the forms. Members are asked to indicate whether they still wish to pursue this option or, given the few involved, whether they would prefer the Member Support Assistant to continue to pursue the forms in the usual way. Outstanding Parish Councils' DPI's are due from:- Farcet, Stilton and Wyton on the Hill. All Parish Clerks have been emailed mid-February for all outstanding forms.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 The Council has a stated commitment to working with our communities and ensuring they get involved with local decision making by ensuring that DPI's are published and the Council is supporting local accountability and transparency in decision making.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Not applicable

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is no legal obligation upon Town and Parish Councils to notify the Monitoring Officer, records indicate that all Town and Parish Councils have adopted a Code of Conduct. Fifty-six of those Parish Councils have adopted a Code based on that adopted by the District Council. Eleven Town and Parish Councils have opted for the Code promoted by NALC, and four have adopted their own version of the Code. The up to date position on each Council is noted in Appendix 2.

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

The Committee take a role for maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and for monitoring the Code of Conduct.

10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Town and Parish Councils Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) forms
Appendix 2 – Town and Parish Council New Standards Regime and Code of Conduct

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

CONTACT OFFICER

Lisa Jablonska, Elections and Democratic Services Manager
01480 388004

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Town and Parish Councils Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) forms

Town/Parish Council	No of Cllrs	DPI Rec'd	Vacancy	DPI Outstanding	NOTES
1 Abbots Ripton	6	6			CORRECT
2 Abbotsley	7	7			CORRECT
3 Alconbury	11	9	2		CORRECT
4 Alconbury Weston	7	7			CORRECT
5 Alwalton	5	5			CORRECT
6 Barham & Woolley	5	4	1		CORRECT
7 Bluntisham	11	11			CORRECT
8 Brampton	15	15			CORRECT
9 Brington & Molesworth	5	5			CORRECT
10 Broughton	7	7			CORRECT
11 Buckden	15	14	1		CORRECT
12 Buckworth	5	5			CORRECT
13 Bury	9	9			CORRECT
14 Bythorn & Keyston	5	3	2		CORRECT
15 Catworth	7	7			CORRECT
16 Colne	9	9			CORRECT
17 Conington	5	5			CORRECT
18 Earith	11	11			CORRECT
19 Easton	5	5			CORRECT
20 Ellington	7	7			CORRECT
21 Elton	9	9			CORRECT
22 Farcet	11	8	1	2	EMAILED 16/02/16
23 Fenstanton	13	13			CORRECT
24 Folksworth & Washingley	9	7	2		CORRECT
25 Glatton	5	5			CORRECT
26 Godmanchester	17	16	1		CORRECT
27 Grafham	7	6	1		CORRECT
28 Great & Little Gidding	7	6	1		CORRECT
29 Great Gransden	9	9			CORRECT
30 Great Paxton	9	8	1		CORRECT
31 Great Staughton	9	9			CORRECT
32 Hail Weston	7	6	1		CORRECT
33 Hemingford Abbots	7	7			CORRECT
34 Hemingford Grey	13	12	1		CORRECT
35 Hilton	9	9			CORRECT

Town and Parish Councils Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) forms

Town/Parish Council	No of Cllrs	DPI Rec'd	Vacancy	DPI Outstanding	NOTES
36 Holme	7	7			CORRECT
37 Holywell cum Needingworth	13	13			CORRECT
38 Houghton & Wyton	9	9			CORRECT
39 Huntingdon	19	19			CORRECT
40 Kimbolton & Stonely	11	11			CORRECT
41 Kings Ripton	5	5			CORRECT
42 Leighton Bromswold	7	5	2		CORRECT
43 Little Paxton	15	13	2		CORRECT
44 Offord Cluny & Offord Darcy	11	8	3		CORRECT
45 Old Hurst	7	7			CORRECT
46 Old Weston	7	6	1		CORRECT
47 Perry	9	9			CORRECT
48 Pidley cum Fenton	7	7			CORRECT
49 Ramsey	17	17			CORRECT
50 Sawtry	15	11	4		CORRECT
51 Sibson cum Stibbington	7	6	1		CORRECT
52 Somersham	15	13	2		CORRECT
53 Southoe & Midloe	7	5	2		CORRECT
54 Spaldwick	7	7			CORRECT
55 St Ives	17	17			CORRECT
56 St Neots	21	21			CORRECT
57 Stilton	11	10		1	EMAILED 16/02/16
58 Stow Longa	5	4	1		CORRECT
59 The Stukeleys	9	9			CORRECT
60 Tilbrook	5	5			CORRECT
61 Toseland	5	5			CORRECT
62 Upton & Coppingford	5	5			CORRECT
63 Upwood & The Raveleys	9	9			CORRECT
64 Warboys	15	15			CORRECT
65 Waresley cum Tetworth	5	4	1		CORRECT
66 Wistow	7	6	1		CORRECT
67 Woodhurst	7	7			CORRECT
68 Woodwalton	5	5			CORRECT
69 Wyton on the Hill	7	3	3	1	EMAILED 16/02/16
70 Yaxley	17	15	2		CORRECT
71 Yelling	7	6	1		CORRECT
Totals	650	605	41	4	

Town and Parish Council New Standards Regime and Code of Conduct

Town/Parish Council	HDC Code	NALC Code	Own Code
Abbotsley	X		
Abbots Ripton	X		
Alconbury	X		
Alconbury Weston		X	
Alwalton	X		
Barham & Woolley	X		
Bluntisham	X		
Brampton	X		
Brington & Molesworth	X		
Broughton	X		
Buckden	X		
Buckworth	X		
Bury	X		
Bythorn & Keyston	X		
Catworth	X		
Colne			X
Conington	X		
Earith		X	
Easton	X		
Ellington	X		
Elton	X		
Farcet		X	
Fenstanton	X		
Folksworth & Washingley		X	
Glatton	X		
Godmanchester	X		
Grafham	X		
Great & Little Gidding	X		
Great Gransden	X		
Great Paxton	X		
Great Staughton	X		
Hail Weston		X	
Hemingford Abbots	X		
Hemingford Grey	X		
Hilton	X		
Holme	X		
Holywell cum Needingworth	X		
Houghton & Wyton			X
Huntingdon	X		
Kimbolton & Stonely	X		
Kings Ripton	X		
Leighton Bromswold	X		
Little Paxton	X		
Offord Cluny & Offord Darcy		X	

Town and Parish Council New Standards Regime and Code of Conduct

Town/Parish Council	HDC Code	NALC Code	Own Code
Old Hurst		X	
Old Weston	X		
Perry	X		
Pidley cum Fenton	X		
Ramsey			X
Sawtry	X		
Sibson cum Stibbington	X		
Somersham	X		
Southoe & Midloe			X
Spaldwick	X		
St Ives	X		
St Neots	X		
Stilton		X	
Stow Longa	X		
The Stukeleys	X		
Tilbrook	X		
Toseland	X		
Upton & Coppingford	X		
Upwood & The Raveleys	X		
Warboys	X		
Waresley cum Tetworth		X	
Wistow	X		
Woodhurst		X	
Woodwalton		X	
Wyton on the Hill	X		
Yaxley	X		
Yelling	X		
TOTAL	56	11	4

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Membership of the Committee

Meeting/Date: Standards Committee - 3rd March 2016

Executive Portfolio: Councillor R Harrison – Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal

Report by: Services Director (Resources) and Monitoring Officer

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

When the Council considered new arrangements for “Standards” required by the Localism Act 2011, it was agreed to retain a Standards Committee. It is no longer a duty for Parish Council representatives to be appointed but the Council decided that Parish Councils should be invited to nominate two Parish Councillors to be co-opted as non-voting Members on the new Committee. Subsequently, the two Parish Council representatives were re-appointed for a further two years.

The Act also established the concept of “Independent Persons” and the appointment of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons was confirmed by the Council in April 2014 for a two-year term.

The terms of office of the Lead and Deputy Independent Persons and of the Parish Council representatives expire on 30th April 2016.

Recommendation:

This report recommends:-

- ◆ that the term of office of the current Parish Council representatives, Mrs D Townsend and Mr P McCloskey, be extended for a further two-year period to 30th April 2018 or until such time as their Parish Council office expires; and
- ◆ that the Council be recommended to affirm the re-appointment of Mrs Gillian Holmes and Mr Peter Baker to the posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons respectively for a further two-year period to 30th April 2018 without the need for further ratification in each year by the Council at its Annual Meeting.

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1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

1.1 The Standards Committee currently comprises:-

- ◆ 8 Members of the Council including one Member who is a Member of the Executive;
- ◆ 2 Town or Parish Councillors, representing Town and Parish Councils in the District who are co-opted and non-voting Members of the Committee;
- ◆ the Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person who are appointed to serve on the Committee for a term of two years from the date of their appointment as required under Section 28 (7) of the Localism Act.

1.2 The terms of office of the Parish Council representatives are due to expire on 30th April 2016. The appointments of the Lead and Deputy Independent Persons are required to be reaffirmed by the Council at its Annual Meeting.

2. FURTHER DETAILS

2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires every principal authority to appoint one or more Independent Persons. The Act contains strict rules preventing a person from being appointed if they are a friend or relative to any member or officer of the authority, or of any Parish Council within the authority's area. It also prescribes the role of Independent Persons. They must be consulted before the authority takes a decision to investigate any allegation.

2.2 Independent Persons, furthermore, may be consulted by a Member of the authority against whom an allegation has been made, as well as by a Parish Councillor in similar circumstances.

2.3 Given the valuable contributions made by the Parish Council representatives to the Standards Committee and training events thus far and the excellent working relationship established by the Monitoring Officer with the Lead and Deputy Independent Persons in the period since their appointments, it is suggested that the terms of office of both the Parish Council representatives and Lead and Deputy Independent Persons be extended to 30th April 2018.

2.4 Under the former Standards regime, the Parish Council representatives and Independent Members were all appointed for four year terms to ensure that the benefit of understanding, experience gained and training received were retained for a reasonable period.

3. CONSULTATION

3.1 The Standards Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman have been consulted and have expressed support for the retention of the current post-holders. The Lead and Deputy Independent Persons and the Parish Council representatives also have been consulted and have indicated they are willing to continue with their membership of the Committee.

3.2 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils has confirmed that it wishes Mrs D Townsend and Mr P McCloskey to continue as its representatives.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The appointment of at least one Independent Person is required by law.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Parish Council representatives receive a modest allowance of £231 per annum plus reimbursement of the costs involved in attending meetings of the Committee and training events. Given their greater involvement in the assessment of complaints, the Lead and Deputy Independent Persons receive an allowance of £1,000 and £500 respectively plus similar expenses.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

District Council's Constitution
Reports/Minutes to the Standards Committee.

CONTACT OFFICER

Tony Roberts, Democratic Services Officer, (01480) 388015.