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## **Standards Committee**

### **Report of the meeting held on 3rd December 2015.**

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#### **Matter for Decision**

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#### **8. ELECTION FREQUENCY**

The Committee has been acquainted with the responses submitted during consultation of the Council's election frequency. This matter appears elsewhere on the Council Agenda.

The consultation has been undertaken as part of the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) of the Council's electoral arrangements. This issue has direct links to the number of Councillors the Council proposes to retain. In total 75 responses have been received. Opinion was equally split on whether to keep to elections by thirds or change to holding elections every four years.

Members have recognised there are strong arguments to support either method of selecting Councillors. They have been reminded that the Council has submitted a proposal to the LGBCE to continue with 52 Councillors and that the LGBCE usually expects Councils that hold elections by thirds to have a number of councillors, which is divisible by three so there is an election in every ward. However, on the grounds that it promotes continuity in the Membership, the Committee has recommended the Council not to resolve to move to all-out elections, thus retaining a pattern of electing by thirds.

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#### **Matter for Information**

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#### **9. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT AND REGISTER OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

The Monitoring Officer has updated the Committee 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. The Monitoring Officer has a duty to establish and maintain a register of disclosable pecuniary interests.

The Committee has been pleased to note that all of the 71 Town and Parish Councils have adopted a Code of Conduct, with 56 based on that adopted by the District Council, 11 have opted for the Code promoted by the National Association of Local Councils and the

remaining four Councils have adopted their own version of the Code. This represents a considerable improvement on the position a year ago. Of the 71 Town and Parish Councils, 61 have had their full Register published, which comprise the Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) forms of all Councillors. Clerks from the remaining 10 Parish Councils have been reminded to send in outstanding DPI forms as soon as possible.

In terms of individual DPis, 592 of a total of 650 have been received from Parish Councillors, 22 are outstanding and 36 are vacancies. The forms of all District Councillors are published.

The Committee has considered how to ensure the outstanding DPis are received. Given the improvement in return rates, it is felt that the Monitoring Officer should write directly to parish Councillors who have not returned DPis before more proactive measures are considered. It has also been suggested that the documentation Councillors receive should be reviewed to ensure it makes clear what their responsibilities are in this respect.

K M Baker  
Chairman