

REPORT TO: **AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

DATE: **4 MARCH 2020**

TITLE: **AMENDMENTS TO CODE OF CONDUCT**

LEAD OFFICER: **SIMON HILL, HEAD OF GOVERNANCE**
(01279) 446099

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** The Committee recommends to Full Council that the revised Code of Conduct (attached as Appendix A to the report) be adopted.

BACKGROUND

1. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to adopt a Councillor Code of Conduct. This Code needs to be consistent with the seven 'Nolan Principles'. The Council adopted its current Code when it transitioned to the Cabinet form of governance.
2. The Code is primarily concerned with ensuring that Councillors adhere to a high standard of behaviour and act ethically. Councillors are also required to maintain a Register of Interests so that decision making is transparent.
3. The Council is required to appoint a Monitoring Officer to investigate any alleged breaches of the Code. Where the Monitoring Officer concludes that an issue would constitute a breach and there is sufficient evidence that a breach occurred the matter is referred to the Hearing Sub Committee, which has been specifically created to consider such matters.
4. In January 2019 The Committee on Standards in Public Life completed a review on local government ethical standards. This review sets out 15 areas of best practice which it requests the Government makes legal requirements.
5. In light of this review it is necessary for the Council to review its current Code of Conduct.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

6. The Nolan Principles have been updated following the introduction of the Code. It is proposed that these are updated to reflect the revised Nolan Principles.
7. The Committee's report recommends that Councillors should declare when they have received a gift or hospitality which totals at least £50 or totals £100 over a year from a single source. This change is reflected in paragraphs 9.1b(iv) and 14.1.

8. Paragraph 11.2 of the Code deals with other pecuniary interests. Currently the paragraph suggests that the Monitoring Officer can provide a dispensation on other pecuniary interests. The Monitoring Officer does not have the legal power to do this and it is recommended that the wording is removed.
9. There are also a number of minor changes which are aimed at simplifying the wording of the Code without changing its legal effect.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

None specific.

Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive

Housing

None specific.

Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing

Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

None specific.

Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing

Governance (Includes HR)

As contained within the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance

Appendices

Appendix A – Revised Councillor Code of Conduct

Background Papers

Local Government Ethical Standards – A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777315/6.4896_CO_CSPL_Command_Paper_on_Local_Government_Standards_v4_WEB.PDF

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.