

Committee: STANDARDS

Agenda Item

Date: 21 March 2011

6

Title: ELECTION 2011

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Summary

1. This report forms part of the Committee's annual work programme. It is to inform members of the position with regard to the forthcoming elections and what will happen thereafter.

Recommendations

2. That members note this report.

Financial Implications

3. None.

Background Papers

4. None.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	None.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Members of the council will be required to sign an undertaking to be bound by the Council's Code of Conduct.
Sustainability	None.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	None.

Situation

6. 2011 is a year of ordinary elections for the district council and the town and parish councils within the district.
7. Although in some areas district councils elect by thirds, Uttlesford has whole council elections which means that all councillors are eligible for re-election at four year intervals.
8. With regard to town and parish councils, not all of these will have contested elections. In a number of councils, there are only sufficient persons nominated to fill all the positions on the council. In some cases there remain vacancies after the date set for the election in which case the parish council is required to co-opt additional members to bring it up to its full strength. Historically about one-quarter of the towns and parishes within the district are likely to have contested elections.
9. It is already known that a number of district councillors will not be seeking re-election. Thus if all councillors who do wish to stand for re-election are re-elected there would nevertheless be an influx of new members without prior experience of being councillors. At present it is not possible to gauge how many new town or parish councillors there will be but it must be anticipated that there will be some.
10. Although the government's stated intention is that the current standards regime should be abolished by 2012 all councillors will be required to sign an undertaking to be bound by the current Code of Conduct and will be required to observe that Code until such time as it is abolished. The Standards Committee will continue to have its functions with regard to the district and town and parish councillors during that interim period.
11. It is therefore the intention of officers to ensure that all new members are given the opportunity to receive training on the Code of Conduct so they are aware of the standards which are expected from them. It is also intended that these sessions will be open to experienced members who wish refresher training.
12. In the run up to the election, special rules with regard to publicity apply. This used to be known as purdah but is now known as the pre-election period. Briefly during this period, the council as a corporate body and officers should not be seen to promote any individual councillor or party political policies. A copy of the guidance on purdah issued to members is attached for members reference.

Risk Analysis

13. There are no risks attached to this report.