

**Committee: STANDARDS**

**Agenda Item**

**Date: 16 June 2014**

**5**

**Title: MONITORING OFFICER UPDATE**

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Item for information

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### **Summary**

1. This report is to update members on activity regarding standards since the last meeting of this committee.

### **Recommendations**

2. 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	None.
Sustainability	None.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	None.

## **Situation**

6. Members will recall from the last update presented on the 3 March 2014 that for the period from the 1 July 2012 to the 3 March 2014 there had been a total of nine allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct. These resulted in three investigations, two findings of no breach of the Code and one finding of breach but with no sanction considered necessary.
7. Since the last report the number of complaints has increased dramatically. Eleven complaints have been received in that period. Four have been passed for investigation. Six have not been passed for investigation and one awaits determination. Of those passed for investigation one is at report stage where there is a finding of a breach of the Code of Conduct. Another is at report stage with a finding of no breach and this is currently being considered by committee members under the call-in procedures and the other two are subject to ongoing investigations which have just commenced.
8. Since the current standards regime came into effect on 1 July 2012, 20 allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct have been received. This compares with 27 complaints for the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2012 although two of those complaints were withdrawn and nine complaints were made by the same member of the public against members of the Planning Committee arising from the same meeting. It appears therefore that whilst the Standards Committee's power of sanction is very much more limited than it was under the old regime complaints continue to be made which suggest that complainants are more interested in securing an acknowledgement/finding of misconduct by councillors than the possible consequences flowing from such a breach.
9. On 4 March 2014 I attended a meeting of Chrishall Parish Council. The parish council had resolutely declined to adopt a Code of Conduct or to complete registers of interest. I had been invited to go and speak to the parish council regarding the Code of Conduct and I attended and gave a presentation which appeared to be well received. I was later informed by the clerk that the parish council had resolved to adopt the Uttlesford Code of Conduct although I have not been informed whether they have also delegated power to the district council to grant dispensations or impose sanctions.
10. Members may recall that I previously reported that one council appeared to be still using the 2007 Code. Having drawn this issue to the attention of the parish clerk I am informed that the council had adopted the Uttlesford Code but had failed to amend its website. Of the 53 parishes in the district there are now only three who have not indicated whether or not they have adopted the Uttlesford Code of Conduct. Of these one is using the correct form of declarations of interest and one may therefore infer that the correct Code is being applied. Sadly I think it is now disproportionate to chase the other two further.

## **Risk Analysis**

11. There are no risks attached to this report.