

DECISION-MAKER:	GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE		
SUBJECT:	ANNUAL REPORT ON THE MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT		
DATE OF DECISION:	9 NOVEMBER 2015		
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
None.	
BRIEF SUMMARY	
At the time of the adoption of the new code of conduct for members in July 2012 the Council requested the Head of Legal and Democratic Services produce an annual report outlining the impact of the new code, a summary of the complaints received and any action taken.	
RECOMMENDATIONS:	
	(i) The Committee is asked to note this annual report for the year 2014/5.
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	Unless there are any changes required to be made to either the Code or the procedures for investigation this report is only for noting
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
2.	None
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
3.	The Governance Committee has the following terms of reference in relation to corporate governance and Code of Conduct issues:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To lead on the Council's duties under Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 and to design, implement, monitor, approve and review the standards of ethics and probity of the Council, both for Councillors and employees. The Committee's powers shall include responding to consultation documents and the promulgation of Codes of Conduct but the adoption and revisions to the local Members Code of Conduct shall be reserved to the Council. • To promote a culture of openness, ready accountability and probity in order to ensure the highest standards of conduct of Councillors and employees.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lead on all aspects of Corporate Governance by promoting the values of putting people first, valuing public service and creating a norm of the highest standards of personal conduct.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To oversee and manage programmes of guidance, advice and training on ethics, standards and probity for Councillors and employees and on the Members Code of Conduct.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be responsible for the Council's register of Members' interests and to receive reports from the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services on the operation of the register from time to time.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be responsible for written guidance and advice on the operation of the system of declarations of Members' Interests and to receive reports from the Monitoring Officer on the operation of the system of declarations from time to time.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish, monitor, approve and issue advice and guidance to Councillors on a system of dispensations to speak on, or participate in, matters in which they have interests and give dispensation in appropriate cases.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exercise the functions of the Council in relation to the ethical framework, corporate governance and standards of conduct of Joint Committees and other bodies.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish a Standards Sub-Committee to investigate and determine appropriate action in respect of alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support the Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer in their statutory roles and the issuing of guidance on them from time to time.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive regular reports on the performance of the Corporate Complaints process, Local Government Ombudsman referrals, Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance and to recommend revisions to related policies and procedures as appropriate.
4.	Since the adoption of the new Members Code of Conduct in July 2012 it has not had cause to meet to consider any allegations of breach of the new code of conduct.
Complaint handling	
5.	The Council has a responsibility for making arrangements to receive and consider complaints against Councillors in Southampton. The flowchart showing the process is attached at Appendix 1. At Stage 2 of the complaints procedure the Governance Committee will determine the complaint following an investigation by the Monitoring Officer.
Complaints Received	
6.	The Council adopted a revised Members' Code of Conduct consistent with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 on 11 th July 2012.
7.	In summary, the regime has been fairly low key. All members have completed their Register of Interests, are reminded annually of the need to keep it updated (the Register is publicly accessible and viewable online) and

	a few minor complaints were received. These are detailed below together with the action taken. All complaints have been resolved or rejected and advice given to the complainant at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure meaning that there have been no determinations or findings of a failure to comply with the relevant Code of Conduct by the committee.				
8.	The Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal and Democratic Services) received two separate complaints about Councillors in 2014/5. There are no trends in terms of the subjects specified in complaints.				
9.	All complaints are taken seriously and investigated as appropriate. In order to be considered under the formal complaints process complaints must be submitted in writing, must provide substantiated information, and should outline what form of resolution the complainant is seeking. When a complaint does not meet these criteria and does not reveal a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct it is treated as a 'general enquiry'. This means that the Monitoring Officer responds to the complainant in writing explaining why the matters complained of do not constitute a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.				
10.	When a written complaint is submitted which provides the relevant information, the Monitoring Officer will consider the complaint and make a decision as to whether it will be treated as a valid complaint or not.				
11.	The complaints submitted about Southampton City Councillors in 2014/5 relate to the following matters:				
	Behaviour alleged	Type of complaint	Outcome & reason	Source of complaint	No of complaints
	Prejudiced a planning application by writing to local residents explaining how to object	General	No breach of the Code. Treated as a general enquiry. Advice and explanation given as to how the planning process works and the role councillors play in assisting local residents, lobbying and as decision makers.	Public	1
	Concerns relating to a planning application	General	No breach of the Code. As above	Public	1
Independent Person					
12.	The Designated Independent Person appointed under the Act has been consulted on emerging issues and complaints as appropriate and meets regularly with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to talk through issues arising. Training has been provided to him as necessary.				
Applications for dispensations					
13.	If a Member wishes to apply for a dispensation to allow them to take part in a meeting with a disclosable pecuniary interest they must submit a written application to the Monitoring Officer. Applications are then decided by him or by the Governance Committee.				

14.	The Localism Act 2011 substantial changed the rules on interests. Regretfully it was incomplete in order to permit members to carry out their full duties in relation to being able to vote on the budget. Annually before full Council in February 2015 all Members are granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to allow them to take part in the decision to approve the Council's budget.
15.	No other dispensations have been applied for.
Supporting Members of Southampton City Council	
16.	Training has been provided to newly elected members, new Cabinet Members and those members who sit on regulatory bodies such as Licensing Committee and the Planning and Rights of Way Panel.
17.	Importantly, the adopted Member Learning and Development Strategy has been implemented and member training via external partners has increased.
Gifts and Hospitality Register	
18.	The requirement for members to register any gifts or hospitality received in their capacity as an elected member increased last year to a threshold of £50. No notifications have been made which probably reflects the limited quantity and value of any received. This does however exclude anything relevant to the elected members who are the Mayor or Sherriff when acting in those capacities.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
19.	None.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
20.	None.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
21.	Chapter 7 Localism Act 2011
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
22.	None.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
23.	n/a

KEY DECISION?	No	
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	None	
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>		
Appendices		
1.	Complaints Flowchart	
Documents In Members' Rooms		
1.	None	
Equality Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.		No
Privacy Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Privacy Impact		No
Other Background Documents		
Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:		
Title of Background Paper(s)		Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	None	