



Meeting Date:	23 March 2022
Report Type:	Public – for information
Report Subject:	Standards in Public Life Report to HMG
Agenda Item No:	6
Contact:	Chairman

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting last month the Parish Council agreed to review how well its own current practices measure up to those recommended by the Government's Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Appended to this report is a table of the 15 the recommendations together with a note of where we need to consider changing our policies/practices in order to match the best practice.

RECOMMENDATION

To consider the actions in the Appendix (shown in red.) 5 involve a change in various policies which, on completion, can be reported back to the Annual Parish Meeting in May. The remaining 5 actions are administrative and, if approved, will be actioned by the Parish Clerk.

Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life

15 Best Practice Recommendations

No	Recommendation	HWPC Compliance?	HWPC Recommended Actions
1	LAs should include prohibitions on bullying and harassment in codes of conduct. These should include a definition of bullying and harassment supplemented by examples.	Dignity at Work policy. Definition plus examples are included.	None
2	Councils should include provisions in their Code of Conduct requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors	Compliance is required by the Code of Conduct.(Policy 6) No specific requirement prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations.	None Amend Policy 6 to include this requirement
3	Principal authorities should review their code of conduct each year and regularly seek, where possible, the views of the public, community organisations and neighbouring authorities	Code is reviewed annually in May. Views of the public etc are not sought	Annually request views via website
4	An authority's code should be readily accessible to both councillors and the public, in a prominent position on a council's website and available in council premises	Code is readily accessible on Website and hard copy is available in Council Offices.	None
5	LAs should update their gifts and hospitality register at least once a quarter, and publish it in an accessible format, such as CSV	Updated quarterly	Publish hospitality register on website whenever gifts are recorded in it.
6	Councils should publish a clear and straightforward public interest test against which allegations are filtered	Not done.	Include a simple test within the Complaints Policy.(5). Suggested filter test : Should this allegation be the subject of an investigation? Can we investigate it?
7	LAs should have access to at least two Independent Persons	Discipline Policy Policy 10) does refer in depth to the use of an Independent	None

No	Recommendation	HWPC Compliance?	HWPC Recommended Actions
		Person but without specifying number that might be available	
8	An Independent Person should be consulted as to whether to undertake a formal investigation of an allegation, and should be given the option to review and comment on allegations which the responsible officer is minded to dismiss as being without merit, vexatious or trivial.	<p>Policy 10 includes reference to consulting an Independent Person.</p> <p>IP is not given the option to review and comment on allegations which HWPC is minded to dismiss.</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Amend Policy 10 to incorporate this provision.</p>
9	Where a LA makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following a formal investigation, a decision should be published as soon as possible on its website, including a brief statement of facts, the provision of the code engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the reasoning of the decision-maker, and any sanction applied.	Not done	Publish on the website all misconduct decisions with the required details.
10	A LA should have straightforward and accessible guidance on its website on how to make a complaint under the code of conduct, the process for handling complaint, and estimated timescales for investigations and outcomes	Fully included in Complaints Policy (5)	None
11	Formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk should be made by the chair or by the parish council as a whole rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances.	Not specifically provided for in Policy	Amend Complaints Policy (5) to include this provision.
12	Monitoring officers' roles should include providing advice, support and management of investigations and adjudications on alleged breaches to parish councils within the remit of the principal authority. They should be provided	Not applicable to HWPC	Enquire of BCP Chief Executive whether the procedures at BCP cover this requirement.

No	Recommendation	HWPC Compliance?	HWPC Recommended Actions
	with adequate training, corporate support and resources to undertake this work.		
13	A LA should have procedures in place to address any conflicts of interest when undertaking a standards investigation. Possible steps should include asking the Monitoring Officer from a different authority to undertake the investigation.	No specific reference to procedures to address conflicts of interest when undertaking standards investigations. It is implicit in all procedures that no-one with a conflict of interest should be involved in an investigation	Make this explicit in our policy
14	Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principles of openness and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.	Not Applicable to HWPC	None
15	Senior officers should meet regularly with political group leaders or group whips to discuss standards issues.	Not Applicable to HWPC	None