

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

13 JUNE 2012

LOCALISM ACT 2011 – THE REVISED ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Report from: Perry Holmes, Monitoring Officer

Summary

The Monitoring Officer will provide a verbal update on the local arrangements for implementation of the changes to the “ethical framework” which will be introduced under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives serving on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 In order to fulfil this role effectively the Committee needs to be up to date with the latest position on how the provisions in the Localism Act 2011 on member conduct will be implemented at a local level.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Localism Act contains provisions relating to the standards regime, which it is expected will come into force on 1 July 2012.
- 2.2 The Localism Act will bring about significant changes to the code of conduct regime and at its last meeting the Committee received a briefing from Weightmans Solicitors covering the headlines within the Act.

3. Progress and update

- 3.1 Work is underway to design the new arrangements relating to member conduct for approval by the Council. Draft regulations have now been published and are being taken into account. The Monitoring Officer will provide a verbal update at the meeting on the key issues which will include adoption of a new code of conduct, the registration and disclosure of interests, the establishment of a new Committee covering conduct issues, the appointment of an independent person and the procedures for handling complaints.

4. Risk Implications

- 4.1 The Council must give effect to the Localism Act and ensure that a new code of conduct, register of interests and procedures are put in place. Failure to do so would mean the Council would be in breach of the law.
- 4.2 Failure to put in place an appropriate Code of Conduct could also mean a serious loss of public confidence in the Council about the behaviour expected of members.

5. Financial and legal implications

- 5.1 The legal implications are contained within the report.
- 5.2 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The financial implications would have to be considered depending on any procedures the Council chooses to put in place.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Standards Committee is invited to note and comment on progress to set up a new standards regime in Medway.

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Background papers

None