

This Report will be made public on 7 March 2023



Report Number **AUG/22/31**

To: Audit and Governance
Date: 15 March 2023
Status: Non Executive
Responsible Officer: Amandeep Khroud, Assistant Director, Governance and Law

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT - MAINTAINING ETHICAL STANDARDS

SUMMARY: This annual report to the Audit and Performance Committee is submitted in accordance with the Committee's term of reference as follows:

"To receive an annual report on the District Council's ethical governance arrangements".

One of the roles of the council's Monitoring Officer is to advance good governance and ensure the highest standards of ethical behaviour are maintained through the effective discharge of their statutory duties.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report AUG/22/31.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The introduction of the Local Government Act 2000 brought about an increased focus by the Government and local authorities on the issue of ethics and Ethical Governance.
- 1.2 Ethical governance, also known as the ethical framework, refers to the processes, procedures, culture and values which ensure high standards of behaviour. Ethical governance' lies at the very heart of the way in which an organisation is run, how its business is transacted and how its decisions are taken.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

- 2.1 Folkestone and Hythe District Council's code of conduct sets out the rules about the behaviour of Members and covers all councillors and co-opted members and requires them, for example, to treat others with respect, not to use their position for personal gain and to register their interests.
- 2.2 The code of conduct is based around seven general principles of conduct. These are:
- Selflessness (doing things for others rather than personal benefit),
 - Integrity,
 - Objectivity (not being biased),
 - Accountability (being responsible),
 - Openness,
 - Honesty and
 - Leadership
- 2.3 Training on the code was included in the District Councillor's Member Induction programme after the May 2019 elections.

- During the financial year 22/23, 5 complaints were received relating to district and parish Councillors, compared with 6 in 21/22, 17 in 20/21 and 16 in 19/20.
- During 22/23, 2complaints related to district councillors, and 3 related to parish Cllrs. The breakdown of themes are set out below:

Public statements including social media / website / internet / email comment	2
Unacceptable Conduct at Council/Committee	2
Conflict of interest	0
Breach of Member/officer protocol	1
Breach of data protection rules	0
Other/miscellaneous	0

- No investigations were conducted in 22/23.

3. REGISTER OF INTEREST

3.1 Elected and co-opted members are required to give written notification to the Monitoring Officer of any disclosable pecuniary interests and other registerable interests to be included in the Council's statutory Register of Interests within 28 days of election or appointment, and to update their declarations as appropriate by notifying any amendments or new interests within 28 days of becoming aware of them. This register of interest and individual members' declarations of interest can be inspected at any time on the Council's website through the mod.gov system.

- No dispensations were granted by the Audit and Governance Committee to District Councillors during 2022/23.
- All elected Members of the Council and all Town and Parish Councils have completed and submitted their Register of Interest forms.

4. WHITSTLEBLOWING

4.1 The whistleblowing policy was reviewed in 2022 and is available on the council's intranet. Officers received whistleblowing training in October 2021. In January 2023, officers also received training in Fraud awareness, and contract standing orders.

4.2 There were no incidences of whistleblowing in 2022/23.

2. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

2.1 Legal Officer's Comments

The legal issues are covered in the main body of the report.

2.2 Finance Officer's Comments

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

2.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications

This report does not directly have any diversity and equality implications.

3. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officers prior to the meeting:

Amandeep Khroud
Telephone: 01303 853253
Email: amandeep.khroud@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Background papers:

[Code of conduct](#)