

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

24 NOVEMBER 2010

Registers of Members' Interests – Town and Parish Councils

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Standards Committee on the work that has been undertaken by the Governance Team since 1 April 2009 in respect of the Registers of Members' Interests for town and parish councils.

Background

2. Following the formation of Wiltshire Council on 1 April 2009 the responsibility for the retention of Registers of Members' Interests for town and parish councils passed to Wiltshire Council and the records retained by the former district councils were forwarded to the Governance Team.
3. The Governance Team carried out an audit of the records received and it became apparent that there were several towns and parishes within the amalgamated areas which had previously either:
 - (a) not submitted the completed Registers of Interests to the respective Monitoring Officer for signature and retention;
 - or
 - (b) had the original Register returned to them by the district council once signed by the Monitoring Officer and the district council had not taken a copy for its records.
4. It was also noted that town and parish councils were submitting forms that were not always fully completed and some councils were continuing to submit forms issued by the former district councils.
5. In August 2009 the Governance Team wrote to all town and parish councils introducing itself and outlining the ways in which Wiltshire Council was able to support towns and parishes in promoting the Code of Conduct for Members and good governance in general.

Main considerations for the Committee

6. Since August 2009 the Governance Team has been engaged in the following activities:
 - obtaining those Registers of Interests not held on file
 - updating clerks with forms issued by Wiltshire Council
 - contacting clerks and confirming the procedures for the submission and retention of Registers
 - giving advice to clerks and councillors regarding the completion of Registers
 - acknowledging receipt of new Registers of Interest
7. An exercise is currently underway to evaluate the processes surrounding the completion and submission of Registers to create a more streamlined system. This will include articles being published in the monthly parish newsletter to remind town and parish councillors to provide Notices of Revision and Confirmation of Interests Previously Given where appropriate.
9. The Governance Team is also developing a dedicated area for towns and parishes on the Standards pages of the Wiltshire Council website, which will provide clerks and councillors with information relevant to them, including Registers of Interests.

Proposal

10. The Standards Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

Training and Communications Issues Arising

11. There are no general training or communications issues arising from the proposals made in this report that would require the formation of a task and finish group of the Standards Committee.

Risks

12. There are no risks associated with the proposals made in this report.

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Monitoring Officer

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None