

SUPPORT TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Standards Committee – 12 September 2017

Report Author **Director of Corporate Governance**

Portfolio Holder **Cllr Derek Crow-Brown**

Status **For Recommendation**

Ward: **All**

Executive Summary:

To consider options for supporting town and parish councils with their governance arrangements.

Recommendation(s):

The Committee consider the options outlined at 3.0.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money	Any proposals coming from this report will have to be funded before any actions are taken.	
Legal	There are no legal implications arising from this report. Any activities relating to parish or town councils will need the consent and agreement of those councils.	
Corporate	This report impacts on corporate priority two : Supporting neighbourhoods. In particular working with the public and community sector to ensure the best outcomes for Thanet.	
Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty	Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	
	Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.	
	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.	
	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,	✓
	Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it	✓
	Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	✓
There are no specific equality considerations identified from this report.		

CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓	
A clean and welcoming Environment	
Promoting inward investment and job creation	
Supporting neighbourhoods	✓

CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓	
Delivering value for money	✓
Supporting the Workforce	
Promoting open communications	✓

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Code of Conduct relates to the conduct of individual members, so, for example, complaints about dissatisfaction with the District or Parish Council's decisions, policies and priorities etc. are outside the jurisdiction of the complaints process.
- 1.2 However, there have been instances where it is apparent that complaints under the code of conduct are symptoms of more general issues and behaviours within the council concerned. This can manifest itself in several ways and can, in extreme cases, make the council appear dysfunctional.
- 1.3 The Committee could take the view that we should not be involved in the internal machinations of another council. However there are two reasons why we might consider doing so; (1) the fact that a dysfunctional council leads to code of conduct complaints and (2) the reputational damage to the district as a whole
- 1.4 Given the above, in the autumn last year the Chairman brokered a meeting with the Kent Association of Local Councils, the Monitoring Officer and representatives of parish and town councils to consider what collectively we might do to address these issues. That meeting considered the following measures:
 - a) An initial training day on improving governance for local councils in Thanet (for all councillors with officers as observers)
 - b) A six month scheme of mentoring support from KALC with a local Clerk and a member of the KALC Executive Committee and a Thanet District councillor.
 - c) A review of the above and consideration how it might be extended if appropriate.
- 1.4 Unfortunately the training provider was not able to undertake this initial training work and the planned programme has not been delivered. A lack of financial resources was one factor in the non-delivery. This initiative has therefore stalled and it was considered appropriate that we bring the matter to the Committee for the views of Members.

2.0 The Current Situation

- 2.1 The views of the Standards Committee are therefore being sought on whether we should pursue this initiative further. In an attempt to engender debate there are a number of questions set out below for consideration:
 - a) Should the Standards Committee get involved at all? Could we, for example, leave it to KALC or some other body?
 - b) What should we do to assist? Training, mentoring, peer review?
 - c) How should this be funded? Should we ask parishes to contribute to a central fund?

3.0 Options

- 3.1 The committee recommend that no further action be taken; or
- 3.2 Agree the actions to date and/or suggest future actions

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