



# **MEMBER CONDUCT ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17**

## 1. Introduction

This is the Member Conduct Annual Report of North West Leicestershire District Council's Audit and Governance Committee and covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

In addition to the responsibilities detailed in the Terms of Reference below, the Audit and Governance Committee promotes high standards of conduct by District Council Members and Members of Town/ Parish Councils in North West Leicestershire. The Audit and Governance Committee complies with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, the regulations and the guidance provided under that legislation, together with Council's adopted Arrangements.

On 27 June 2012 Council adopted the North West Leicestershire Code of Conduct for Members which had been drafted by Members for Members. The Code incorporates all the legislative requirements under the Localism Act 2011 in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests together with retaining the personal obligations in existence under the previous regime.

## 2. Terms of Reference

**Membership:** Ten councillors

**Quorum:** Three District councillors

### **Terms of Reference:**

To act as the Authority's Audit Committee, to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to be responsible for the financial reporting process. In particular:

- Consider the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements, the control environment, and anti fraud and corruption arrangements
- Seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors
- Be satisfied that the Authority's assurance statements properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it
- Approve (but not direct) Internal Audit's strategy and plans and monitor performance
- Review summary Internal Audit reports and the main issues arising, and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary
- Receive the annual report of Internal Audit
- Consider plans of External Audit and inspection agencies
- Monitoring of relevant reports and action plans
- Ensure there are effective relationships between Internal and External Audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted
- Approve the Council's statement of accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet and receive the External Auditor's opinion and reports to members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by External Audit
- To deal with the Annual Audit and Inspection letter and in particular to:
  - consider matters raised in the annual governance report
  - agree, if necessary, to adjust the financial statements
  - approve the representation letter on behalf of the Council
  - consider and agree, if considered appropriate, any actions proposed in the annual governance report and statement

- To have delegated authority to deal with all matters relating to the Council's final accounts

### **Sub-committees of the Audit and Governance Committee**

All Audit and Governance Committee members will form a pool from which members will be drawn based on their availability and the requirements of the particular Sub-committee as and when required.

#### **Assessment Sub-committee**

Assessment of complaints in accordance with the Council's Guidance and to either:

- Determine that there should be no further action
- refer the matter for full investigation
- refer the matter for other action

#### **Review Sub-committee**

Consideration of requests for a review in accordance with the Council's Guidance.

#### **Determinations Sub-committee**

To receive reports from the investigating officer and to decide either:

- to determine finding of no failure to comply with the Code of Conduct
- to determine finding of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and impose relevant sanctions
- refer the matter for other action

## **3. Composition**

### **District Councillors**

All appointed by Council on 17 May 2016

**Chairman:** Councillor J Clarke

**Deputy Chairman:** Councillor D Harrison

Councillor R Adams (May 2016 – February 2017)

Councillor R Ashman

Councillor F Fenning

Councillor G Jones

Councillor Gill Houlton

Councillor P Purver

Councillor S Sheahan

Councillor A C Saffell

Cllr S McKendrick (February 2017)

### **Parish Representatives**

The following parish councillors be appointed as Parish Representatives with effect from 7 May 2016 for the remainder of the Administration (May 2019):

Mr Peter Moulton – Whitwick Parish Council

Mr David Gothard – Appleby Magna Parish Council

Mr Ray Woodward – Whitwick Parish Council

Ms Pat Thomas – Ashby Woulds Town Council

## **Independent Persons**

The legislation requires the Council to appoint at least one Independent person who potentially advises all those involved in a Standards complaint, including the Monitoring Officer, and who must be consulted prior to the determination of a complaint.

Through an open advertising process conducted with partner authorities the Council appointed the following pool of independent persons from whom one can be drawn as and when required:

Michael Pearson  
Mark Shaw  
Christine Howell  
Gordon Grime  
Richard Gough  
Rob Wade

The main officer support for the Committee is provided by the Monitoring Officer (Elizabeth Warhurst), the Deputy Monitoring Officer (Dave Gill) and the Democratic Support Officer (Rachel Wallace).

## **4. Meetings and Work Programme**

The Audit and Governance Committee meets a minimum of four times per annum. In addition to its scheduled meetings, sub committees still meet on an ad hoc basis in order to consider and determine allegations of Member conduct. The Committee has its main work planned in advance through a Work Programme which enables it to be more proactive, strategic and focused in its approach to key issues.

## **5. Reporting Arrangements**

The Audit and Governance Committee receives quarterly reports which have enabled Members to be reminded of the issues it has dealt with during each quarter and address any issues which this has highlighted.

## **6. Procedures and Workloads**

### **(a) Dispensations**

During 2016/17, there were no applications received for a dispensation from either District or Parish members.

### **(b) Complaints made to the Monitoring Officer under the New Code of Conduct 2016/17**

<u>Complaints made:</u>	5
by Members of the Public	0
by Parish Councillors	2
by District Councillors	3
by Parish Clerk	0
by Council Officer	0

### Complaints against:

a Parish Councillor	0
a District Councillor	5

From the above mentioned complaints:

### 3 complaints were resolved informally:

All of these complaints related to unprofessional conduct of councillors.

### 2 complaints were withdrawn:

These complaints also related to unprofessional conduct of councillors.

### 0 complaints are at informal resolution stage:

During the investigation of one of the complaints referred to above Michael Pearson, an Independent Person appointed by the council assisted the Monitoring Officer during the informal resolution process in a complaint involving district councillors. Mr Pearson provided an independent view on the issues to be resolved and the Monitoring Officer found the input and assistance from Mr Pearson very useful and his input facilitated the complaint being resolved.

There were no complaints received involving parish members and therefore there was no need to engage the parish representatives on the committee.

### **(c) Complaints referred to the Standards Assessment Sub Committee**

From the above-mentioned complaints: - None

From complaints received in 2015/16:- 2

### **(d) Members' Register of Interests**

The Local Member Support Officers undertake regular checks of the Register of Members' Interests and provide advice and assistance to Parish Councils on the completion of the Registers.

### **(e) Advice and Training**

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer continue to provide both parish and district members with advice, both proactively and on request, on member's interests and all aspects of corporate governance.

Training is also currently being provided to members on all aspects of data protection and freedom of information.

## **7. Policies & Procedures**

The Audit and Governance Committee oversees the ethical framework of the Council including oversight of:

- the Whistle Blowing Policy
- complaints handling
- Ombudsman investigations.
- Freedom of Information and Data Protection

**Elizabeth Warhurst  
Monitoring Officer**

**Councillor J Clarke  
Chairman**

**OUR VISION**

North West Leicestershire will be a place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home

**Legal and Support Services  
North West Leicestershire District Council  
Council Offices, Whitwick Road, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 3FJ**