

This Report will be made public on 5 March 2024



Report Number **AuG/23/23**

**To:** Audit and Governance  
**Date:** 13 March 2024  
**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/23/23.

## 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 2023 elections.
- During the financial year 23/24, 5 complaints were received relating to district and parish Councillors, compared with 5 in 2022/23, 6 in 21/22, 17 in 20/21 and 16 in 19/20.
  - During 23/24, all 5 complaints related to parish and town Cllrs. The breakdown of themes are set out below:

Public statements including social media / website / internet / email comment	4
Unacceptable Conduct at Council/Committee	0
Conflict of interest	1
Breach of Member/officer protocol	0
Breach of data protection rules	0
Other/miscellaneous	0

- No investigations have yet been conducted in 23/24 (as at February 2024).

## 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.
- 3.2 At the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 13 September 2024, four dispensations were granted in respect of Oportunitas Ltd. No further dispensations were granted during 2023/24.

#### **4. WHISTLEBLOWING**

- 4.1 The whistleblowing policy was reviewed in 2022 and is available on the council's intranet.
- 4.2 There were no incidences of whistleblowing in 2023/24.

#### **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](mailto:amandeep.khroud@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

##### **Background papers:**

[Code of conduct](#)