

Agenda Item 18.

TITLE	Code of Conduct – Additional Guidance
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Standards Committee on 13 October 2015
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Andrew Moulton, Head of Governance and Improvement Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY
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To provide guidance for Councillors and Members of the public on certain behaviours in Para. 9.2.8 of the Code of Conduct: Bullying and Intimidation, and Blogging, Social Networking and use of Social Media.
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RECOMMENDATION

To approve the Guidance on “Bullying and Intimidation” and Guidance on “Blogging, Social Networking and use of Social Media.
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SUMMARY OF REPORT

To review the guidance and make amendments where the Committee consider it appropriate.

Background

1. At the last Committee meeting, Members asked the Monitoring Officer to arrange for guidance to be written for 'Bullying and Intimidation' and also on 'Blogging, Social Networking and use of the Media'. The draft guidance is shown at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to this Report..
2. Guidance is based on guidance from Standards for England, which was disbanded when the Localism Act 2011 came into force. In addition, input has been asked from Paul Hoey on the guidance for Bullying, which has shown to be controversial when making a code of conduct complaint decision. Paul Hoey was a case officer with Standards for England and is an expert on Members Code of conduct matters.

Analysis of Issues

Providing Guidance for Members to reduce, as far as possible, complaints being upheld against them. It also serves to advise members of the public who are unsure about whether to complain. Finally, guidance will help with the decision making process for the Monitoring Officer and Hearings Panels who make decisions on Code of Conduct matters.

Guidance must however be in a form which is easy to work with, and the challenge is to provide guidance which is neither over-legalistic, nor over-simplified so that the important issues are missed. Standards Committee members are asked for their view on the draft guidance attached, at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	0	0
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	0	0
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	0	0

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
None

List of Background Papers
Standards for England (archived) papers entitled: "Blogging – Quick Guide" and "Bullying and the Code of Conduct" http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120202153716/http://www.standardsforengland.gov.uk/Guidance/TheCodeofConduct/Guidance/Onlineguides/

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