

**TITLE** Update on status of Town and Parish Member Codes of Conduct

**FOR CONSIDERATION BY** Standards Committee on 23 January 2023

**WARD** (All Wards);

**LEAD OFFICER** Monitoring Officer - Andrew Moulton

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Overview and assurance of the status of each Member Code of Conduct policy for all town and parish councils in the borough.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Standards Committee considers the update at Appendix 1 and advises the Monitoring Officer of any follow-up actions and/or further support for individual town or parish councils.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The role of councillor across all tiers of local government is a vital part of the country's system of democracy. It is important that all councillors can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. Conduct as an individual councillor affects the reputation of all current councillors and influences the future decisions of individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances in putting themselves forward to become councillors.

In 2020, the Local Government Association (LGA) published a model Member Code of Conduct. The Borough Council adopted this model (with some minor revisions) at its meeting of 22 July 2021.

The remit of the Borough Council's Standards Committee also covers the standards arrangements for the 17 town and parish councils in the borough and requires the borough council's Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee to administer any complaints against town and parish councillors. Individual town and parish councils have been encouraged to consider the LGA Model and whether they needed to update their local Code of Conduct. This report provides an update at Appendix 1 on the status of the Member Code of Conduct of each town/parish council and provides an opportunity for the Committee to further promote and enhance awareness of the importance of high standards of conduct amongst all councillors.

## Background

The Localism Act 2011 makes arrangements for regulating the conduct of members of councils in England. The previous framework, brought in under the Local Government Act 2000, and the organisation called “Standards for England” have gone.

Town and Parish councils must adopt their own codes of conduct, but town and parish councils can adopt the code of their principal authority (i.e. Wokingham Borough Council), if they wish. Principal authorities are responsible for investigating complaints against town and parish council members.

The remit of the Borough Council’s Standards Committee also covers the standards arrangements for the 17 town and parish councils in the borough and requires the borough council’s Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee to administer any complaints against town and parish councillors.

In 2020, the Local Government Association (LGA) published a model Member Code of Conduct. The Borough Council adopted this model (with some minor revisions) at its meeting of 22 July 2021.

## Analysis of Issues

At the meeting of 24 October 2022, the Committee asked for an update on the status of town and parish Member Codes of Conduct. At appendix 1 is the latest position.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

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

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b> (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
None specific.

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;</li> <li>• advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;</li> <li>• foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.</li> </ul> An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this report

<b>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></b>
There are no direct implications arising from this report on the Council’s carbon neutral objective.

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
Not applicable

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Section 9 of WBC Constitution

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## Appendix 1 – Status of Towns and Parish Member Code of Conduct

Town/Parish Council	Code last updated	Plans for review
Woodley Town Council	Revised and approved at Full Council on 11th October 2022.	At our last Full Council meeting it was also resolved for our Strategy & Resources Committee to review the Code of Conduct specifically at their next meeting, which is due to take place on 22nd November.
Twyford Parish Council	26 July 2022	N/A
Wokingham Town Council	Revised and approved at Full Council December 2021	Likely to be reviewed with new Council 2023 and every 4 years with a new council coming in unless there is national change. It would however, be annually on the Annual Meeting of Council for members to note again.
Barkham Parish Council	Use the Model Code of Conduct which was updated in November 2021	N/A
Finchampstead Parish Council	Reviewed 2021 and updated version adopted 15 December 2021	<a href="https://www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/policies/code-of-conduct">https://www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/policies/code-of-conduct</a>
Arborfield & Newland Parish Council	Adopted at Council Meeting in September 2022	N/A
Sonning Parish Council	May 2022	Adopted the Model Code of Conduct in May 2022 following an earlier meeting where Andrew Moulton referred to this. The Parish Council agreed that it made sense to adopt the same version as WBC were using (LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020).
Remenham Parish Council	Currently under review.	
Swallowfield Parish Council	August 2015	No plans noted.
St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council	June 2018	No plans noted.
Earley Town Council	November 2020	Adopted the updated LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct, as amended and adopted by Wokingham Borough Council, in November 2020.
Ruscombe Parish Council	Updated and adopted May 2022	
Charvil Parish Council	Code of conduct is the same as the Borough's and was updated when we last updated ours	
Shinfield Parish Council	21-May-15	
Wargrave Parish Council	14-Jun-20	
Winnersh Parish Council	13-Oct-15	
Wokingham Without Parish Council	Tbc	Monitoring Officer to follow up with clerk.