

# Wolverhampton City Council

## OPEN INFORMATION ITEM

Committee/ Panel	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>	Date: <b>13 January 2011</b>
Originating Service Group(s)	<b>CUSTOMER AND SHARED SERVICES</b>	
Contact Officer(s)/	<b>S KEMBREY/F DAVIS</b>	
Telephone Number(s)	<b>4910/4932</b>	
Title/Subject Matter	<b><u>MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT</u></b>	

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### 1.0 **Recommendation**

1.1 Standards Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

## **MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Joint Meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 16 April 2007 agreed that the Standards Committee receive regular reports from the Monitoring Officer. This is the third such report for 2010/11.

### **2. Local Assessment**

- 2.1 Since the last Monitoring Officer's Report to the Standards Committee on 7 October 2010 seven complaints alleging that Members have failed to comply with the Members Code of Conduct have been received. They have been referred to the Standards (Assessment) Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee to assess the complaints had been convened for 16 December 2010. It was, however, necessary to re-arrange this meeting and the Sub-Committee will now take place in due course and a further diary date has had to be vacated.

### **3. Publications**

- 3.1 No publications have been issued by Standards for England since Bulletin 48, in August 2010.

### **4. The Future of Standards for England and the Standards Framework**

- 4.1 The Localism Bill was published on 13 December 2010. It includes provisions to abolish the current Standards regime. Details of the provisions in the Bill so far as they relate to Standards are included in a separate report to the Joint Audit/Standards Committee for its meeting on a date to be agreed.
- 4.2 The Bill also has wide ranging implications for governance. This includes provisions on predetermination to devolve new powers to Councils so that councillors will no longer be prevented from voting on campaign issues. There is also a new power to create directly elected mayors and a Local Authority general powers of competence to enable a Local Authority to do anything that individuals may do
- 4.3 The legislation proposed in the Bill aims to build the "Big Society" and has provisions to change the relationship between central and local government, devolving power locally. This includes rights:-
- (a) for communities to exercise challenge to take over services;
  - (b) to bid to buy local assets;
  - (c) to veto excessive council tax rises through a referendum;
  - (d) to repeal of bin tax laws.
- 4.4 There are extensive provisions relating to Planning which includes measures to replace the Infrastructure Planning Commission with a democratically accountable system for major infrastructure and the abolition of current

regional planning processes. The detail of these provisions will be reported to Planning Committee.

- 4.5 There are also measures in the Bill affecting social housing. A new community right to build gives communities the Freedom to build new homes and amenities. There are provisions relating to allocation and tenure of social housing with the aim of giving authorities the flexibility to use their social housing stock to maximum effect and reduce waiting lists.
- 4.6 A summary of the content of the Bill is included in a separate report to the Joint Audit /Standards Committee to its meeting on 13 January 2011.
- 4.7 A seminar for Members and Officers on the Bill is also being arranged by Democratic Support.
- 4.8 The proposals in the Bill are still subject to change as the Bill makes its way through parliament. The Bill's second reading is due on 17 January 2011.

## 5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 This report details work undertaken to comply with the ethical framework relating to Local Government and part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000. [FD/05012011/A].

## 6. **Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The Council is required to provide the Monitoring Officer with sufficient resources to undertake her responsibilities. Provision is made within the revenue budget. [DM/06012011/S]

## 7. **Equalities Implications**

- 7.1 The Members Code of Conduct contains specific obligations relating to equalities.

## 8. **Environmental Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.