

## FOLLOW UP REPORT ON DRAFT NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

### SUMMARY:

Further to the Monitoring Officer's Report of 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021, which was considered by the Committee at its last meeting, and as agreed, there has been a period of consultation on a draft new Code of Conduct for Councillors ('the draft new Code') mirroring a new Model Code produced by the Local Government Association. Information on the extent of the consultation and the responses received is within this report.

### RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Committee consider whether they wish to make any changes to the proposed draft new Code in light of the responses to the consultation or otherwise from this Committee's consideration of the draft new Code;
2. That the Committee recommend to the Council that the draft new Code be adopted as is, or with any changes the Committee wish to make, as appropriate.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the end of last year the Local Government Association (LGA) published a new Model Code of Conduct for Councillors after extensive consultation. The Model Code was developed in order to support local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance taking account of the Committee on Standards in Public Life 2019 report on Ethical Standards in Local Government. The current Council Member of Code of Conduct requires to be updated to meet best practice recommendations flowing from that Report including a prohibition on bullying and harassment; a requirement for councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation and a prohibition re trivial or malicious allegations by Councillors.
- 1.2 In January Members of this Committee approved the draft new Code of Conduct for Members of Rushmoor Borough Council (Appendix A) and a period of consultation was undertaken. That consultation is in its last week. Members should note that only 5 responses have been received not all of which were relevant to the proposed update to the Code and the comments that were received can be viewed in Appendix B. Any responses received after publication of this Report will be verbally reported at the meeting by way of an update.

## **2. CONSULTATION**

- 2.1 There is a consultation page on the Council's website accessible from a link on the home page and which will remain 'live' until 5pm on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March: <https://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/codeofconduct> The consultation and this link was notified to Members by the Chief Executive in his newsletter of 5<sup>th</sup> March. There have been in excess of 227 views of the webpage. In addition the Communications Team have written to some 3,000 residents who have asked to be kept up to date on Council news and consultations being undertaken by the Council. There has also been a social media campaign offering residents and interested parties the opportunity to air their views on the proposed new Code. The Monitoring Officer has also contacted a number of local and partner organisations asking for their views. These include the Hampshire Police, Citizens Advice, the Garrison, Rushmoor Voluntary Services, the Nepali Community, Farnborough 6<sup>th</sup> Form College and some of the churches in the Borough.

## **3. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

- 3.1 The Committee will note there have been only 4 responses received and these are set out in the appendix in a table with comments from the Corporate Manager – Legal against each. It is considered that the Code as drafted provides safeguards around each of the concerns listed. These responses are believed to be from local residents.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Members are requested to consider whether they wish any changes made to the draft Code in light of the responses received and thereafter to consider the recommendation to Full Council to adopt the new Model Code of Conduct for Councillors as drafted, or as amended, as appropriate.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

1. *Report to Licensing Audit and General Purposes Committee of 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021.*
2. *Local Government Association Model Member Code of Conduct Consultation May 2020*
3. *LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct December 2020*
4. *Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life Report on Local Government Ethical Standards January 2019.*

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