

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

22 March 2022

Report of the Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Delegated

1. OFFICER CODE OF CONDUCT/ ANTI-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE

The report asks Members to approve updates to the Officer Code of Conduct and the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure.

Introduction

- 1.1. An audit of the ethical culture within the Borough Council was undertaken as part of the agreed 2021/22 audit plan.
- 1.2 The audit recommended that amendments were made to both the Officer Code of Conduct and the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure. The proposed amendments have been considered by Management Team and the Joint Employee Consultative Committee and are now submitted to the General Purposes Committee for formal approval.

2. Officer Code of Conduct

- 2.1 The audit made the following findings in respect of the Officer Code of Conduct:-

- A disclosure of interest form is available on Staff-net, and following completion is sent to the Chief Officer. Discussions were had with regards to there being no central register to record staff interests. The Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive advised that a handful of returns were retained in the office, which she was in the process of scanning in, and that going forward a central record of returns will be maintained. Review of the disclosure of interest's form highlighted that currently there is no instruction to pass on the form to Executive Services following Chief Officer's approval. The Code of Conduct states that employees must declare interest to their Chief Officer, however there is no mention of how, or any reference to the Disclosure of Interests form. In addition, it doesn't state any sanctions or consequences for not declaring an interest and annual nil returns are not required.

- *The hospitality section of the Officer Code of Conduct advises that “acceptance of offers of hospitality should be recorded in the Hospitality book kept in the Chief Executive’s office”. The register is now held electronically, maintained by the Personal Assistant to Executive Services and there is no reference in the code to the gifts and hospitality form that is required to be completed. The Code of Conduct states that interests should be disclosed to the Chief Officer, however it is felt that the process of how should be made clear.’*

2.2 The revised Code of Conduct (with tracked changes to address the above findings) is attached as **Annex 1**.

3. Anti-Bullying & Harassment Procedure

3.1 The audit recommended the following amendments to this procedure:-

‘Amend the Anti- Bullying and Harassment Procedure to state that Personnel are to be passed a copy of the outcome of investigations (to be retained on employee personnel files) that have resulted in no further action following an investigation in line with the anti-bullying and harassment procedure

3.2 The audit further noted that the procedure had not been updated since 2016, so a general review of the procedure was undertaken to ensure that it remained up to date.

3.3 The revised procedure (with tracked changes to address the recommendations) is attached as **Annex 2**.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Members are **RECOMMENDED** to approve the amendments to the Officer Code of Conduct and Anti-Bullying & Harassment Procedure.

Background papers:Nil

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