

NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

MONITORING OFFICER PROTOCOL

A. General Introduction

1. The Monitoring Officer is a statutory appointment pursuant to Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This Protocol provides some general information on how those statutory requirements will be discharged at North Norfolk District Council.
2. The responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer role rest with the Legal Services Manager. The Deputy Monitoring Officer is the Strategic Director - Information or in his/her absence such other person as the Monitoring Officer shall appoint in writing.
3. A summary list of the statutory responsibilities appears in the table annexed to this document.

B. Working Arrangements

4. Having excellent working relations with Members and Officers will assist in the discharge of the statutory responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer. Equally, a speedy flow of relevant information and access to debate (particularly at the **early stages** of any decision-making by the Council) will assist in fulfilling those responsibilities. Members and Officers must, therefore, work with the Monitoring Officer to discharge the Council's statutory and discretionary responsibilities.
5. The following arrangements and understandings between the Monitoring Officer, Members and Strategic Directors are designed to ensure the effective discharge of the Council's business and functions. The Monitoring Officer will:-
 - (a) be alerted by Members or Officers to any issue(s) of concern, including, in particular, issues around legal powers to do something or not, ethical standards, probity, propriety, procedural or other constitutional issues that are likely to (or do) arise;
 - (b) have advance notice (including receiving Agendas, Minutes, Reports and related papers) of all relevant

meetings at which a binding decision of the Council may be made (including a failure to take a decision where one should have been taken) including the Council, Cabinet, Committee meetings and Corporate Management Team (or equivalent arrangement);

- (c) have the right to attend any meeting of the Council (including the right to be heard) before any binding decision is taken by the Council (including a failure to take a decision where one should have been taken) at or before the Council, Cabinet, Committee meetings and Corporate Management Team (or equivalent arrangements);
- (d) in carrying out any investigation(s) have unqualified access to any information held by the Council and to any Officer who can assist in the discharge of his functions;
- (e) liaise with the other statutory officers (Head of Paid Service and the Chief Financial Officer) regarding any legal, ethical standards, probity, propriety, procedural or other constitutional issues that are likely to (or do) arise;
- (f) meet regularly with the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Financial Officer to consider and recommend action in connection with Corporate Governance issues and other matters of concern regarding any legal, ethical standards, probity, propriety, procedural or other constitutional issues that are likely to (or do) arise and ensure that the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer have up to date information regarding emerging issues;
- (g) report to the Council, from time to time but at least annually, on the Constitution and any necessary or desirable changes following consultation, in particular, with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer;
- (h) as per the statutory requirements, make a report to the Council, as necessary, on the staff, accommodation and resources she requires to discharge his statutory functions;

- (i) have a special relationship with the Chairman on the Standards and Scrutiny Committees with a view to ensuring the effective and efficient discharge of their duties;
 - (j) develop effective working liaison and relationship with the Standards Board for England, the District Auditor and the Local Government Ombudsman, including the giving and receiving of relevant information, whether confidential or otherwise;
 - (k) maintain and keep up to date relevant statutory Registers for the declaration of Members' Interests, Gifts and Hospitality;
 - (l) give advice on the Council's Code of Member Conduct and, if appropriate, inform the Standards Board for England if, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, there is a serious breach of the Code;
 - (m) in consultation, as necessary, with the Chairman of the Council and Standards Committee and the Standards Board for England, defer the making of a formal report under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 where another investigation body is involved;
 - (n) make arrangements to ensure effective communication between his office and the Clerks to Parish Councils on Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee issues;
 - (o) have sufficient resources to enable her to address any matters concerning his Monitoring Officer functions;
 - (p) subject to the approval of the Standards Committee, be responsible for preparing any training programme for Members on ethical standards and Code of Conduct issues; and
 - (q) keep the Deputy Monitoring Officer briefed on any relevant issues that he/she may be required to deal with in the absence of the Monitoring Officer.
6. To ensure the effective and efficient discharge of the arrangements set out in paragraph 5 above, Members and Officers will report any breaches of statutory duty or Council policies or procedures and other vices or constitutional concerns to the Monitoring Officer, as soon as practicable.

7. The Monitoring Officer is also available for Members and Officers to consult on any issues of the Council's legal powers, possible maladministration, impropriety and probity issues, or general advice on the constitutional arrangements (eg. Procedure Rules, Policy Framework, Terms of Reference, Scheme of Delegations, etc).

SUMMARY OF MONITORING OFFICER FUNCTIONS

	<u>Description</u>	<u>Source</u>
1.	Report on contraventions or likely contraventions of any enactment or rule of law.	Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
2.	Report any maladministration or injustice where Ombudsman has carried out an investigation.	Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
3.	Appointment of Deputy.	Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
4.	Report on resources.	Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
5.	Investigate misconduct in compliance with Regulations and directions of Ethical Standards Officers.	Regulations. Directions in individual cases. Local Government Act 2000 Section 66(1)+66(6).
6.	Establish and maintain Registers of Members' Interests and Gifts and Hospitality.	Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Code of Member Conduct.
7.	Advice to Members on interpretation of Code.	
8.	Key role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct through support to the Standards Committee.	Statutory Guidance paragraph 8.20.
9.	Liaison with Standards Board and Ethical Standards Officers.	New Ethical Framework, practical implications.
10.	New Ethical Framework functions in relation to Parish Council.	Section 83(12) of the Local Government Act 2000.
11.	Compensation for maladministration.	Section 92 of the Local Government Act 2000.
12.	Advice on vires issues,	DETR guidance.

	maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and policy framework and budget issues to all Members.	
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