

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
29 November 2017

Question

Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

The Code of conduct report at para 12 says “this committee has determined that monitoring officer resolution is appropriate, proportionate and can be relied upon for upholding high standards of conduct. How can the Monitoring officer be relied upon for upholding high standards of conduct?”

Answer

I have taken this to be a structural question and not a personal question.

The council has a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the council; the monitoring officer provides assistance to the council in meeting that duty.

The code of conduct complaints procedure was approved by this committee in May 2016 following a review overseen by a member working group and supported by the advice of our then independent person Mr John Sharman. Views from parish councils were also sought on the procedure.

The procedure sets out, amongst other things, the processes to be followed and the criteria to be applied by the monitoring officer in assessing or resolving complaints. The monitoring officer has unfettered access to the council’s appointed independent persons and seeks their view in coming to a resolution.

This committee receives reports on numbers of complaints received and resolved, and monitors trends; this information, together with consultation feedback from councillors and parish councils, is used to inform periodic reviews of both the code of conduct itself, and the associated complaints procedure to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

In addition, the monitoring officer raises awareness of the expected standards of conduct through training and advice offered to elected members of Herefordshire Council, and parish councillors and their clerks throughout the county.