

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Monitoring Officer	Report Number: JAC22
To: Joint Audit and Standards Committee	Date of meeting: 3 March 2014

UPDATE ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the measures taken to comply with the requirements within Chapter 7 of the Localism Act and to identify any further actions required.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the measures taken to comply with the requirements within Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 be noted.
- 2.2 That the Committee identifies any further steps required to be taken.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 None directly arising from this report. The new measures have however impacted upon staff resources.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
The Council breaches its obligations under the Localism Act	Low	Marginal	Training provided and guidance issued to explain requirements of the new code. All measures already undertaken except the audit of the published parish registers on website at MSDC.
Register of interests forms are not completed by all councillors	High	Critical	Monitoring Officer working with Parish Clerks to ensure accurate, up-to-date data is being used; and continues to pursue outstanding forms

5. Consultations

- 5.1 The issue regarding non return of register of interests forms has been raised at the Suffolk Monitoring Officers Group.

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 Not relevant to this report.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 None.

8. Key Information

- 8.1 This report identifies the actions outstanding to secure full compliance with Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 by (i) the Councils, (ii) parish/town councils and (iii) councillors.

- 8.2 Chapter 7 came into effect on 1 July 2012 and introduced a new standards regime for all councils. A new Local Code of Conduct has been adopted across Suffolk, a new complaints system has been put in place and a pool of 'independent persons' has been appointed. These arrangements were made at the outset and appear to be working effectively. There are however still some outstanding actions as follows:-

District Councillor Register of Interests

- 8.2.1 Previously, across both Councils all but two Babergh councillors have completed updated Register of Interests forms. As a result of action taken since the last committee meeting, all councillors have now completed updated Register of Interest forms.

Parish Council Register of Interests

- 8.2.2 Likewise, all town/parish councillors were required to complete new Register of Interests forms which are held on a public register by the district council. Action taken since the last committee meeting has resulted in a further increase in compliance. As at 19 February 2014, 97% (previously 91%) of parish councillors within the Babergh district and 94% (previously 89%) of those within the Mid Suffolk district have submitted completed forms.

- 8.2.3 There is now only 1 out of 67 (previously 4) parish/town council in Babergh and 3 out of 95 (previously 7) parish councils in Mid Suffolk from whom no Registers have been received, as identified in the Table below. .

Babergh district	Mid Suffolk district	
Aldham	Ashbocking	Wingfield
	Earl Stonham	

Publication of Registers

- 8.2.4 All of the completed district council Register of Interests forms have been placed on the Councils' respective websites as required by the Localism Act. The Babergh parish/town council registers have been placed on its website and an audit has been carried out to ensure that the data is up-to-date and accurate.
- 8.2.5 Since the previous meeting of the committee the technical ICT problems in hosting the Mid Suffolk parish/town registers have been resolved. The Mid Suffolk parish/town council registers have been placed on its website. An audit commenced to ensure the data is up-to-date and accurate.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 None.

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