

Report of the Monitoring Officer

ATTENDANCE BY GROUP LEADERS

Background

1. The Committee has invited the following to attend this meeting:
 - Councillor James Alexander, Labour Leader of the Council
 - Councillor Ian Gillies, Leader of the Conservative group
 - Councillor Andy D'Agorne, Leader of the Green group

Councillor Carol Runciman, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, is of course, the Chair of the Committee.

2. It has been suggested that a discussion can take place for 30 minutes or so during which the group leaders may identify any issues relating to monitoring standards of conduct and our arrangements for dealing with complaints that they think the Committee might wish to address. The Committee may also wish to feed back any emerging issues that they have identified.
3. It is particularly opportune that this meeting takes place only a month after the Committee on Standards in Public Life issues its fourteenth report. The Committee has some concerns about the changes made to the local government standards regime which are referred to elsewhere on the agenda. However, the following extract from the Committee's report may help frame some of the discussion:

“Prime responsibility for maintaining high standards of behaviour must always lie with individuals and organisations, not with external regulation. We welcome therefore the intention behind the Localism Act 2011 to encourage a greater sense of local responsibility for standards and to address some of the more

vexatious and disproportionate aspects of the local government standards regime.

To function effectively, local leadership and responsibility for standards requires certain conditions to be met – including strong leadership and robust, visible action against those who fall short. The Local Government Association has a particularly important responsibility in this respect. We would expect the new regime, like the previous one, to function well in those areas where party leaders are prepared to provide leadership. It is likely to do less well where such leadership is absent.

Past history suggests that problems are most likely in areas with monolithic political cultures and correspondingly little political challenge, where partisan rivalry is most bitter and tit for tat accusations most common, or in those predominantly rural areas with significant numbers of independent members without the benefit of party discipline.”

Recommendations

4. Members are recommended to:

Note the report and identify any issues arising from the discussion with Group Leaders which the Committee may wish to action or consider in more detail at a future meeting

Reason: To promote high standards of ethical conduct

Contact Details

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Report

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Approved

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: None