

18. COUNCILLORS' CODE OF CONDUCT - ANNUAL REVIEW 2015-16

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Governance Manager presenting the annual review of the Councillors' Code of Conduct for 2015-16. This was to promote high standards of conduct, assist members in understanding and complying with the code and to meet the requirements of the councils Code of Governance.

The report provided a summary of the annual review and included details of the duties and obligations placed on the council in raising awareness of the code and assisting members to comply with the code. This included organising an annual training session for members and producing an annual report to the council on the operation of the Code.

The report continued by providing a few issues of note from the report as follows :-

- The volume and complexity of complaints remained high (with a backlog of cases growing year on year);
- Complaints of failure to register or declare an interest on a downward trend;
- There was a significant increase in complaints alleging failure to show respect;
- There was a small but growing number of complaints about comments made on social media; and
- In future, reports would list the number of cases handled, rather than the number of complaints made.

The report also provided a summary of complaints made in 2015-16 including those pertaining to West Lothian Council and the keys issues arising from those complaints.

The report then concluded with details of what was proposed for the coming year in terms of further compliance with the code.

It was recommended that Council Executive :-

1. Note the significant points and developments described in the report in relation to the operation of the Councillors' Code of Conduct in 2015-16;
2. Note that a further briefing session would be offered to members in relation to more recent development since the end of that year; and
3. Note that induction and training sessions on compliance with the Code would feature as part of the post-election induction programme for new members.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.