

Section 38

Monitoring Officer Protocol

A. General Introduction to Statutory Responsibilities

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 in Cannock Chase District Council.
2. The current responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer role rest with the Director of Governance, who undertakes to discharge their statutory responsibilities with a positive determination and in a manner that enhances the overall reputation of the Council. In doing so, they will also safeguard, so far as is possible, Members and Officers, whilst acting in their official capacities, from legal difficulties and/or criminal sanctions.
3. A summary list of the statutory responsibilities appears in the table annexed to this Protocol. In general terms, the Monitoring Officer's ability to discharge these duties and responsibilities will depend, to a large extent, on Members and Officers:
 - (a) complying with the law of the land (including any relevant Codes of Conduct).
 - (b) complying with any General Guidance issued, from time to time, by the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer.
 - (c) making lawful and proportionate decisions.
 - (d) generally, not taking action that would bring the Council, their offices or professions into disrepute.
4. In the absence of the Monitoring Officer this Protocol shall apply to the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

B. Working Arrangements

5. Having good working relations with Members and Officers will assist in the discharge of the statutory responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer and keep the Council out of trouble. 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 (and their staff) to discharge the Council's statutory and discretionary responsibilities.

6. The following arrangements and understanding between the Monitoring Officer, Members and Chief Officers are designed to ensure the effective discharge of the Council's business and functions. The Monitoring Officer will:
- (a) be alerted by Members and Officers to any issue(s) that may become of concern to the Council, 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 of the Council at which a binding decision of the Council may be made (including a failure to take a decision where one should have been taken) at or before the Council, Cabinet, Cabinet Member, Committee meetings and/or Directors' Management Team (or equivalent arrangements).
 - (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, Cabinet Member, Committee meetings and/or Directors' 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 their functions.
 - (e) ensure that other statutory Officers (Head of Paid Service and the Chief Financial Officer) are kept up-to-date with relevant information 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 Finance 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.
 - (g) report to the Council, from time to time, on the Constitution and any necessary or desirable changes following consultation, in particular, with the Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer and the Standards Committee.
 - (h) as per the statutory requirements, make a report to Council as necessary on the staff, accommodation and resources required to discharge their statutory functions.
 - (i) have a special relationship or respect and trust with the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Chairs of the Cabinet, Standards, Overview and Scrutiny Committees with a view to ensuring the effective and efficient discharge of Council business.
 - (j) develop effective working liaison and relationship with the Standards Board for England, the Council's external Auditors and the Local Government

Ombudsman (including having the authority, on behalf of the Council, to complain to the same, refer any breaches to the same or give and receive any relevant information, whether confidential or otherwise, through appropriate protocols, if necessary) and settle compensation payments for alleged or actual maladministration found against the Council.

- (k) maintain and keep up-to-date relevant statutory registers for the declaration of Members' interests, gifts and hospitality.
 - (l) give informal advice and undertake relevant enquiries into allegations of misconduct (in the absence of a written complaint being received by the Standards Board for England) and, if appropriate, make a written report to the Standards Committee (unless the Chair of the Standards Committee agrees a report is not necessary) or to the Standards Board for England if, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, there is a serious breach of the Code of Conduct for Members.
 - (m) in consultation, as necessary, with the Chairs of the Council, Cabinet, 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 investigative body is involved.
 - (n) have sufficient resources to enable them to address any matters concerning their Monitoring Officer functions.
 - (o) 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
 - (p) appoint a deputy and keep them briefed on any relevant issues that they may be required to deal with in the absence of the Monitoring Officer.
7. 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.
8. 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 (e.g., Standing Orders, policy framework, terms of reference, Scheme of Delegations etc.).
9. To ensure the effective and efficient discharge of this Protocol, the Director of Governance will ensure adequate insurance and indemnity arrangements are in place for the same to protect and safeguard the interests of the Council and the proper discharge of the Monitoring Officer role.

C. Sanctions for Breach of Cannock Chase Council's Code of Conduct for Members and This Protocol

10. Complaints against any breach of Cannock Chase District Council's Code of Conduct for Members must be referred to the Standards Board for England, which could lead, ultimately, to the disqualification of a Member. Complaints against any breach of this Protocol by a Member will be referred to the Standards Committee and to the relevant Leader and/or Chief Whip of the Political Party Group. Complaints against any breach of this Protocol by an Officer may be referred to the Managing Director.

Summary of Monitoring Officer Functions

	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
1.	Report on contravention or likely contraventions of any enactment or rule of law.	Section 5, Local Government and Housing Act 1989
2.	Report on any maladministration or injustice where Ombudsman has carried out an investigation.	Section 5, Local Government and Housing Act 1989
3.	Appointment of Duty.	Section 5, Local Government and Housing Act 1989
4.	Report on resources.	Section 5, Local Government and Housing Act 1989
5.	Receive copies of whistleblowing allegations of misconduct.	Local Policy
6.	Investigate misconduct in compliance with Regulations (when made) and directions of Ethical Standards Officers.	Regulations when made. Directions when made in individual cases. Local Government Act 2000 Sections 66(1)+66(6)
7.	Establish and maintain registers of Members interests and gifts and hospitality.	Section 81 Local Government Act 2000 and draft Model Code
8.	Advice to Members on interpretation of the Code.	Adopted Code
9.	Key role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct through support to the Standards Committee	Statutory Guidance paragraph 8.20 (as amended)
10.	Liaison with Standards Board and Ethical Standards Officers	Standards Board for England Guidance
11.	Ethical framework functions in relation to Parish Councils	Section 83(12) Local Government Act 2000
12.	Compensation for maladministration	Section 92 Local Government Act 2000
13.	Advice on vires, issues, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity, and policy framework and budget issues to all Members	Department for Communities and Local Government guidance and associated legislation.