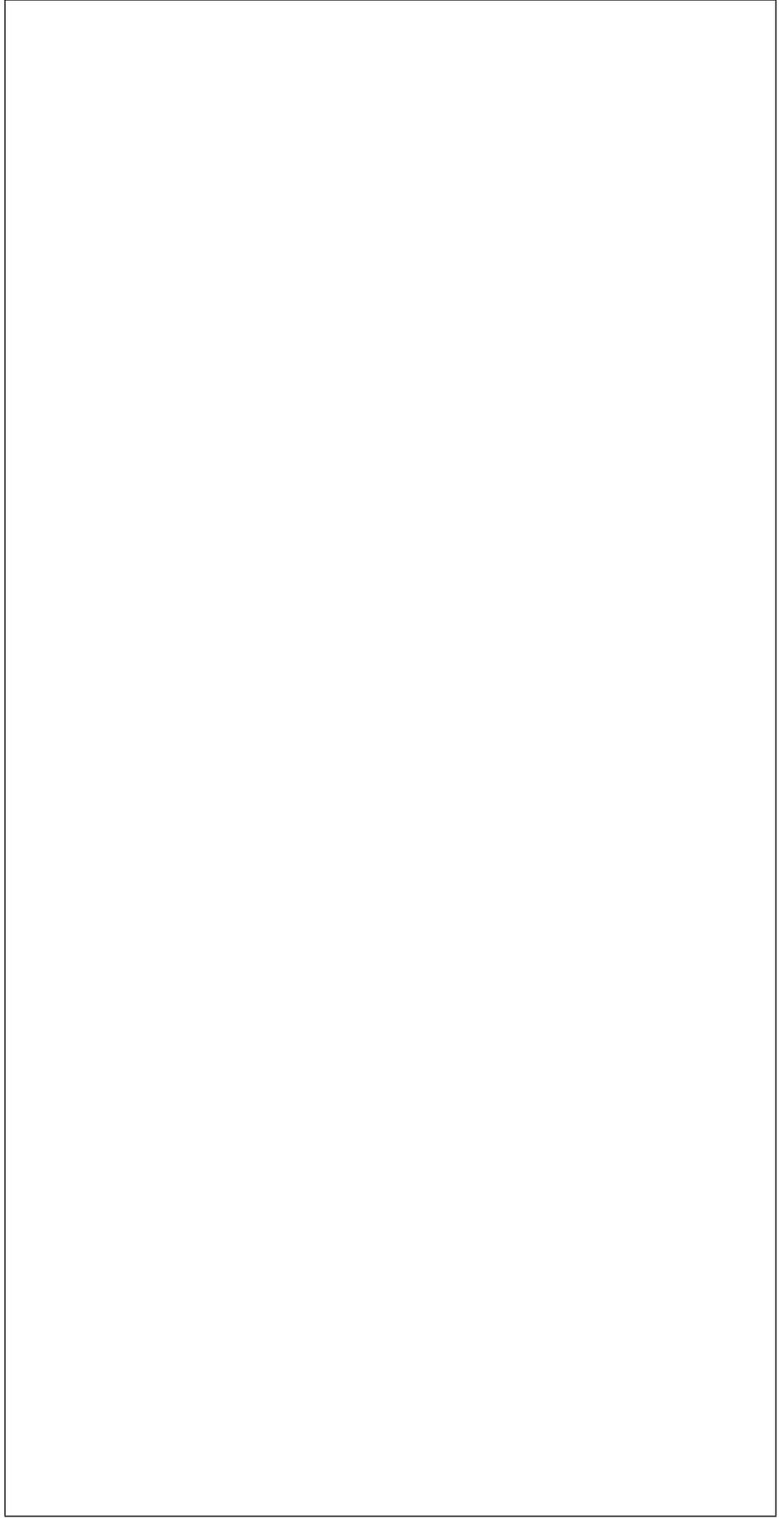
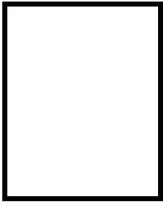
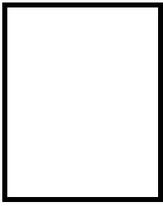
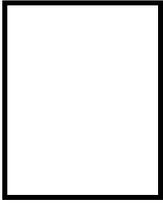
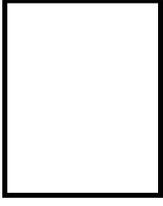
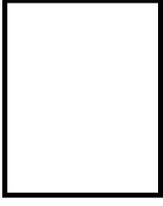
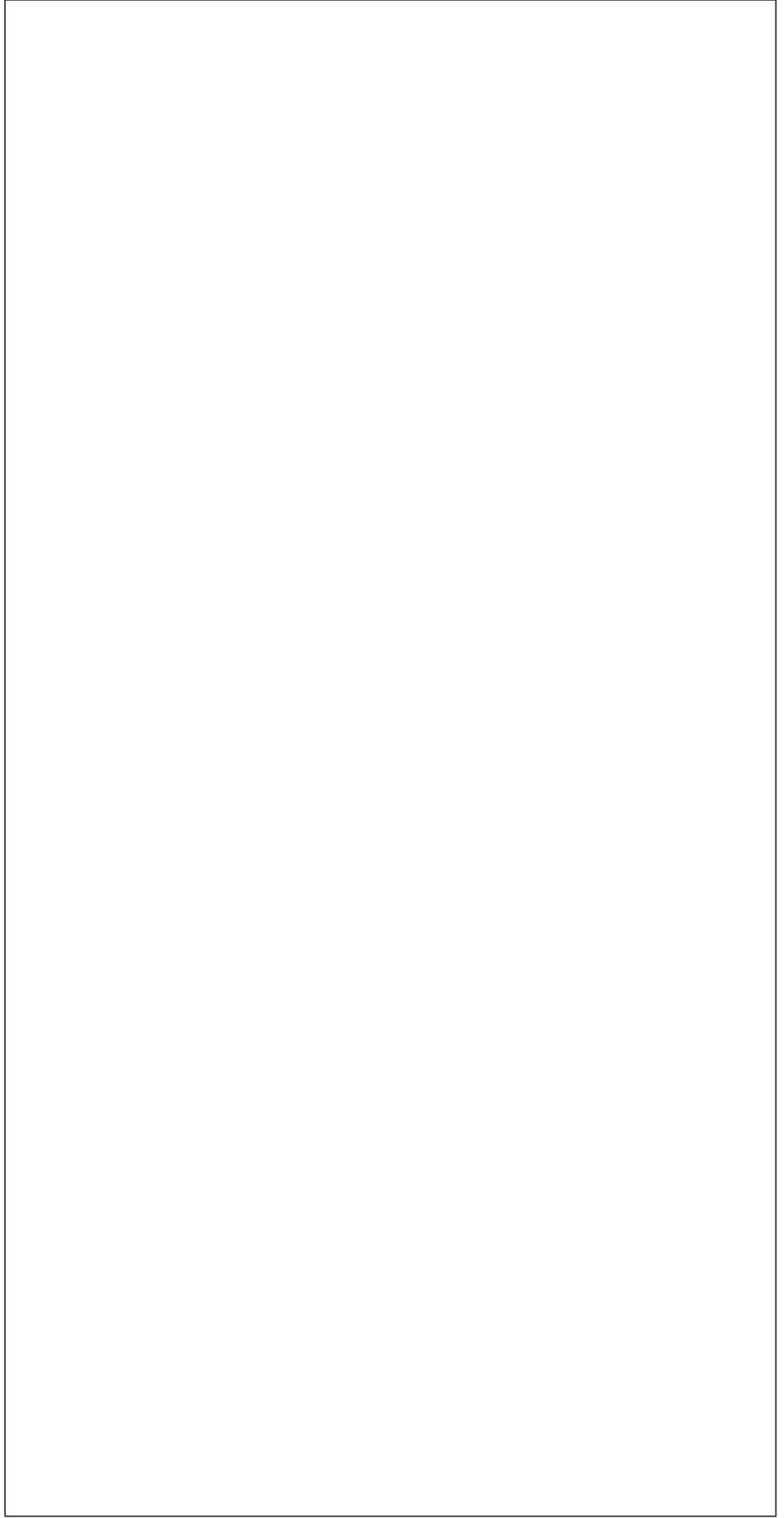
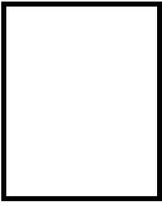
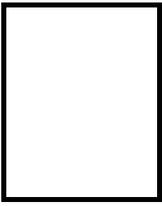
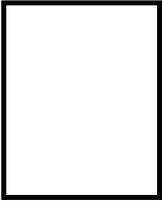
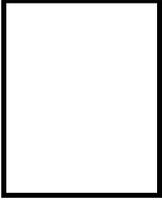
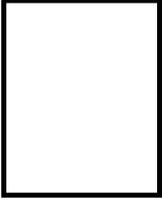
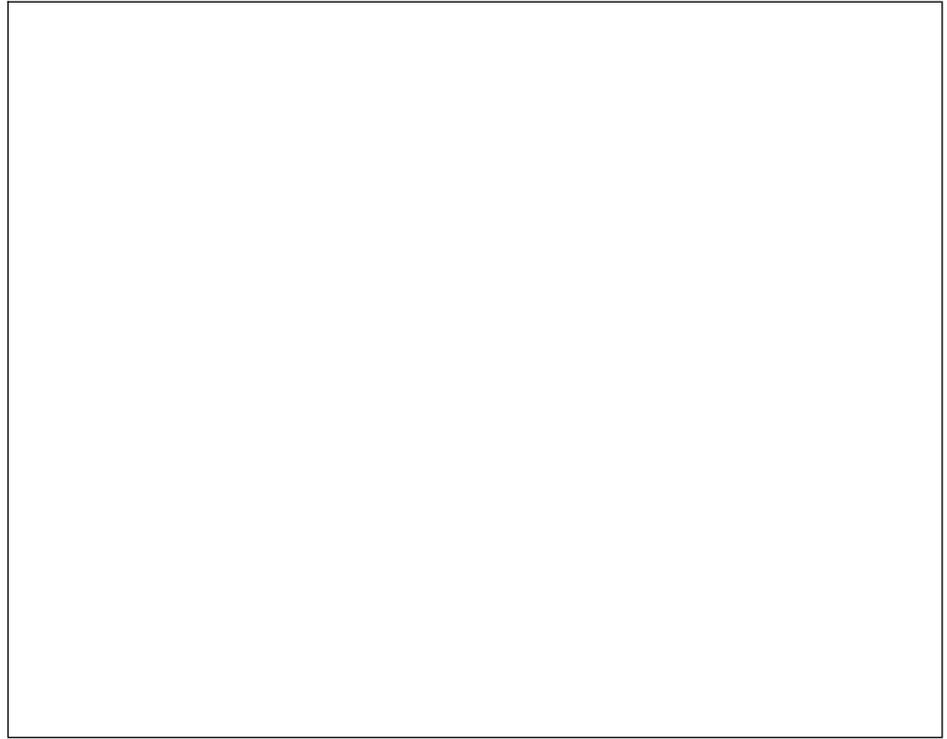


**REPORT OF:**      **The Monitoring Officer**  
**TO:**                **Standards Committee**  
**DATE:**            **18<sup>th</sup> March 2019**







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**SUBJECT: Arrangements for dealing with complaints in respect of Members Code of Conduct – Handling Vexatious Complainants**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To consider the handling of vexatious complainants and potential updates to the Arrangements for dealing with complaints in respect of Members Code of Conduct.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to receive the information on the handling of vexatious complainants and in this respect, to consider any potential updates to the Arrangements for dealing with complaints in respect of Members Code of Conduct.

**3. BACKGROUND**

The Committee receives regular updates on the complaints received in respect of member conduct. However from time to time some councillors have experienced difficulties with some constituents becoming unreasonable in relation to their complaints, or generally in their interaction with elected members, sometimes expressing then their feelings as complaints.

Members of the Committee will be aware that for complaints about council services the council has developed and established as part of its Corporate Complaints Policy, specific guidelines for dealing with unreasonable complainants. **Appendix ` ` refers.**

During the members training programme this year (2018/19) the Corporate Complaints Manager also delivered a presentation to councillors on how they may initially handle unreasonable complainants. **Appendix ` ` refers.**

The Committee also requested in July 2018 that as part of the work programme this year, the issue of the handling of vexatious complaints in the context of the Arrangements for dealing with Complaints in respect of the Members code of Conduct also be considered.

This was because the Committee had felt that the number of vexatious complainants was increasing and whilst these complaints continued to be addressed correctly under the code of conduct, pending the conclusion of the initial assessment process, this often impacted negatively on those councillors who are the subject of the complaints and also waste scarce administrative resources initially handling the complaints.

Under the Code the issue of vexatious complainants is addressed in the initial assessment stage of the process although there is little guidance to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer is asked when deciding whether a complaint be considered to take into account "*Whether the complaint appears to be malicious, vexatious, politically motivated or tit for tat*"

The Committee is asked to note the advice on the handling of unreasonable/vexatious complainants applied to wider complaints and consider what, if any potential updates to the Arrangements for dealing with complaints in respect of Members Code of Conduct, should be considered.

#### **4. RATIONALE**

The Localism Act requires Councils to put in place mechanisms for reporting and investigation of complaints. Reviewing and updating the procedures supporting this process, is appropriate and reasonable to ensure their continued effectiveness.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The statutory provisions for the Standards Framework are set out in the Localism Act 2011.

#### **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

A governance framework in local authorities is necessary to promote and maintain high ethical standards, and to ensure public confidence.

#### **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None contained in this report.

#### **8. CONSULTATIONS**

The Council's arrangements for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct have been discussed by the Standards Committee and any proposals will be the subject of consultation with and, approval of full council.

#### **Chief Officer/Member**

Contact Officer: David Fairclough  
Date: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019

Background Papers: The Localism Act 2011