

STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

1. The Council's Standards Committee was dissolved in 2016 and its functions incorporated into the terms of reference of the Governance and Audit Committee.
2. A Code of Conduct Working Group was convened and met on one occasion during the year to consider the continuing viability of Affected Interests within the Code of Conduct regime given their non-statutory basis as well as a general sense of disquiet amongst some Members as to their application in practice. . The Working Group agreed to retain Affected Interests but to limit their effect. Consequently whilst any Member possessing an Affected interest in a matter still needs to disclose such an interest they will no longer be required to refrain from participating or voting on the matter.

Complaints

3. Under the current procedure for the handling of complaints alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members, a complaint is first considered by the Monitoring Officer. The options available to the Monitoring Officer at that stage are:-
 - refer for investigation
 - refer for some other form of action ("other action")
 - determine that no further action is required.("no action")

If a complaint is referred for investigation the ensuing report is considered by the statutory Independent Person and the Monitoring Officer. At that stage the options are:-

- refer to a Code of Conduct Panel for consideration.
 - refer for resolution by some other form of action (e.g. if the investigation finds that there has been a breach and the Member agrees to apologise)
 - no further action required (investigation finds no breach which conclusion is agreed by the independent person and Monitoring Officer)
4. In the period between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 the Monitoring Officer received 6 complaints alleging breaches of Codes of Conduct for Members. The grounds of each complaint and its outcome are set out in the table below.

	Date of Complaint	Status of Complainant	Borough or Parish Councillor	Grounds of Complaint	Outcome
1	May 2017	Resident	Borough	Social media comment	No action. Unsubstantiated
2	May 2017	Resident	Borough	Social media comment	No action. Unsubstantiated
3	May 2017	Resident	Borough	Social media	Apology.

				comment	Informal resolution.
4	May 2017	Resident	Borough	Social media comment	Apology. Informal resolution.
5	Nov 2017	Resident	Borough	Undisclosed Personal Interest	No action. Unsubstantiated
6	Feb 2018	Resident	Borough	Not particularised	No action Unsubstantiated

5. The table reflects the growing trend of relatively low level complaints which do not warrant the time and expense of investigation under the Standards Framework .In each case where no action was taken this decision was preceded by consultation with the Independent Person (Dr Louis Lee) before being shared with the Complainant and subject member. In accordance with a protocol adopted in 2016, the Party whip was also notified.

Previous years data

Year	No. of Complaints	Upheld
2008/09	0	0
2009/10	6	2
2010/11	1	0
2011/12	2	0
2012/13	4	0
2013/14	6	0
2014/15	5	0
2015/16	2	0
2016/17	7	0

- 6 Whilst the adequacy of sanctions within the Standards regime continues to attract debate nationally there are currently no proposals flowing from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to introduce further legislation.
7. In January 2018 The Committee for Standards in Public Life (“CSPL”) commenced a review of ethical standards in local government. The findings from that review are still awaited and will be reflected in next year’s Annual Standards report for this Council. A round table meeting of Monitoring Officers, Clerks and Independent Persons was hosted by the CSPL on 18 April. A summary note of that roundtable discussion which will help inform the findings is attached (**Annex A**)

Councillors are reminded of their duties both in respect of the rules relating to the registration and disclosure of Interests set out in the Code of Conduct and their behavioural obligations under the Code.