

TITLE	Standards Committee Annual Report 2023/24
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 21 March 2024
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Graham Ebers, Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Resources and Assets

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The main aim of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain the highest standards of conduct by elected Members representing the Borough, Town and Parish Councils. Local government impacts the lives of residents every day, providing essential services to those it serves. High standards of behaviour help to build public trust and confidence in public institutions.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2023/24.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The annual report of the Standards Committee for 2023/24 is attached. The report has been developed to enable the residents to form a view about the effectiveness of the Committee's activities during the year and its oversight of the standards framework within which Wokingham Borough Council operates.

The role of the Standards Committee is to promote, monitor and enforce probity and ethical standards amongst elected Members within the Wokingham Borough, including Town and Parish Councillors. The Localism Act 2011 removed the requirement for a national code of conduct and statutory Standards Committees. The Act introduced a locally focussed "light touch" framework for the adoption of a Member Code of Conduct, and processes for the receipt and consideration of complaints. Although not obliged to do so under the terms of the Localism Act, Wokingham Borough Council decided to maintain a dedicated Standards Committee.

The report provides a summary of the Committee's activities during the year, including the number and type of Code of Conduct complaints considered. The Committee also considered national initiatives and examples of best practice.

Background

The Standards Committee Annual Report for 2023/24 is attached.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£Nil	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£Nil	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£Nil	NA	NA

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None.

Cross-Council Implications
The Committee considers complaints from across the Council's activities. Setting high standards of behaviour helps to build trust and confidence in the Council.

Public Sector Equality Duty
The Committee considers the Council's equality duties in the consideration of Code of Conduct complaints.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
No direct implications.

List of Background Papers
None

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