

TITLE	Update on Complaints and Feedback
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Standards Committee on 11 January 2021
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Director of Corporate Services - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To inform and feedback results of the Member Complaints process.

RECOMMENDATION

To note the report and consider any issues arising.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Since the last report on Complaints to the Committee, on 12 October 2020, there have been five new complaints received.

Appendix A provides a summary of the complaints and the latest position on each.

A key issue for the Committee's work in 2021 will be the need for further training and guidance on Members' use of social media.

Also, the Committee is asked to consider any other broader training issues that arise from these complaints.

Background

Under Section 9.1.13.5 of the Council's Constitution, the Monitoring Officer provides a report to the Standards Committee, on a quarterly basis, which contains the following: the number and nature of complaints received; progress on any investigations and associated costs; and identify areas where training or other action might avoid further complaints. However, the name(s) of the Member(s) will not be disclosed.

Since the last report to the Committee on 12 October 2020, there have been five new Code of Conduct complaints received.

Under the Council's adopted policy for the consideration of Code of Conduct Complaints, the Monitoring has delegated authority to decide whether the complaint:

- can be resolved informally i.e. by mediation with the two parties before making a decision on whether the complaint merits formal investigation;
- requires investigation;
- should be referred to the Standards Committee;
- no further action should be taken.

Analysis of Issues

The latest position on existing complaints is shown at Appendix A.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

The work and conduct of Councillors can impact all aspects of the Council's services.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
Not applicable

List of Background Papers
None

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Code of Conduct Complaints

Date Received	Subject Member	Summary of Complaint	Progress/Conclusion	Date Concluded
5/3/2020	Town & Parish Member	Complaint received from a Town & Parish Clerk about bullying and disrespect to other Members and officers, and a potential breach of that Councils' equality duties.	Following an initial evaluation of the complaint in consultation with the Chairman and Independent Person, an independent investigation was commissioned which indicated evidence of a breach. The hearing will be held with a Panel of Members of the Standards Committee. At the time of writing, this is scheduled to be held on 12 January.	Ongoing
4/6/2020	Two WBC Members	Complaint received from a member of the public that alleges two Councillors were not adhering to social distancing rules. However, the complainant is unclear as to which part(s) of the Code of Conduct may have been breached.	The Monitoring Officer made an initial evaluation of the complaint and following consultation with the Chairman and Independent Person on 1 July. It was concluded that there was no evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct.	1/7/20
23/7/2020	WBC Member	Complaint received from a member of the public. Allegation that Councillor had breached disrespect and bullying provisions in the Code as a consequence of statements made on social media.	Following an initial evaluation of the complaint in consultation with the Vice-Chairman and Independent Person, an independent investigation has been commissioned. The investigator's report is expected to be concluded early in the New Year.	Ongoing
28/7/2020	2 WBC Members	Complaint received from a member of the public.	The Monitoring Officer made an initial evaluation of the complaint and, following consultation with the Chairman	6/11/20

		Allegation that Councillors had breached disrespect rule in failing to adhere to social distancing guidance.	and Independent Person, it was concluded that there was no evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct.	
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Date Received	Subject Member	Summary of Complaint	Progress/Conclusion	Date Concluded
25/11/2020	WBC Member	Complaint received from another WBC member about a social media post made by the subject member that it is alleged to have breached confidentiality.	The Monitoring Officer made an initial evaluation of the complaint and in consultation with the Chairman and Independent Person on 8 December it was decided to commission an investigation into the matter. The investigation is currently underway at the time of writing.	Ongoing
3/12/2020	WBC Member	Complaint received from a member of the public alleging that a social media post by the subject member was disrespectful and in breach of clause 9.2.8.1 of the Code of Conduct.	The Monitoring Officer consulted with the Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Independent Person on 21 December. It was concluded that there was no breach of the Code of Conduct. However, it was also concluded that the Standards Committee should consider a proposed Member Guide to Use of Social Media to be incorporated in the Council's Constitution in due course.	21/12/20
14/12/2020	Town & Parish Member	Complaint received from a Town & Parish Councillor about the conduct of a fellow Councillor during a Council meeting.	The Monitoring Officer will make an initial evaluation of the complaint prior to consulting with the Chairman and Independent Person early in the New Year – a verbal update will be provided to the Committee.	Ongoing
21/12/2020	Town & Parish Member	Complaint received from a Town & Parish Councillor	The Monitoring Officer will make an initial evaluation of the complaint prior to	Ongoing

		about the conduct of a fellow councillor during a Council meeting.	consulting with the Chairman and Independent Person early in the New Year – a verbal update will be provided to the Committee.	
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