



Standards Committee

Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Cases and work update 2023-24

Report of the Monitoring Officer

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report provides information relating to complaints received since the last Standards Committee on 14 November 2022. It also outlines areas in which training, or education have been identified which could assist Councillors' understanding of the standards regime's requirements and the actions proposed to meet these training needs.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee receive and note the report.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. To provide members with an update in terms of the complaints received by the Monitoring Officer and to demonstrate good governance.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. Since implementation of the current Standards regime in June 2012, a total of 122 cases have been considered by the Monitoring Officer (including the cases mentioned herein). Details of these cases have been periodically reported to the Committee, with the last report in November 2022. A summary of complaints is provided at Appendix A.
- 4.2. The appendix does not include complaints that have previously been reported to the committee as determined unless there are actions outstanding.
- 4.3. Since the date of the last report, 13 alleged Code of Conduct complaints have been considered/are in the process of being considered by the Monitoring Officer.
- 4.4. The table at Appendix A confirms the date of the complaint, if it related to a Borough, Parish or Town Councillor, if the complaint was made by a member of the public or another Borough, Parish or Town Councillor, the nature of the complaint and the action taken to address the complaint.
- 4.5. The table also confirms which cases have been discussed with the Independent Persons. The Independent Persons are appointed by a positive

vote from a majority of all the members of Council. There are a number of statutory restrictions on eligibility for this role to ensure that the post-holder has no close associations with the Council and is therefore truly independent. They are not a member of the Standards Committee, but they must be consulted by the Monitoring Officer prior to any decisions or findings on alleged breaches of the Code and may be consulted at other stages of the complaints process.

- 4.6. Where complaints were not accepted under the Code, the details have not been included as to do so would be misleading and could be seen to misrepresent the nature of complaints received.

5. Other work

- 5.1. Since the last meeting of this committee in November 2022, the Council has committed its support to the Local Government Association Debate not Hate campaign and the Leader has signed the online public statement to this effect. As a committee we need to consider how we now imbed this throughout the Council, there are various examples of good practice from other Local Authorities we can learn from, and it is proposed that a meeting of the Committee be convened to consider this item in early 2024.
- 5.2. Induction training was made available to all councillors, including some introductory training around Standards. There were 28 attendees at this training, with only four new councillors unable to attend. Those who didn't attend were contacted and given the opportunity to catch up with an officer separately. The slides are also available on the councillor portal.
- 5.3. Further training specifically around Standards Investigations took place on Wednesday 29 November. 14 councillors attended this training including all but one member of the Standards Committee who could not make the date in question.
- 5.4. Standards Committee is required to review the Member Code of Conduct on an annual basis. In addition, the Committee is required to review the Officer/Member protocol every four years, and this is on the agenda for discussion at tonight's meeting. The review of the Code of Conduct will be on the agenda for the next meeting.
- 5.5. Should any member of the committee wish to discuss potential other items of business that they consider that Standards Committee should be reviewing please contact the Monitoring Officer directly to discuss further.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1. None identified.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications. The Independent Person roles are funded through existing budgets.

7.2. Legal Implications

This committee is responsible for maintaining high governance standards within the Council pursuant to its duties under the Localism Act 2011. The Act also requires local authorities to adopt a Code of Conduct that is consistent with the 'Nolan' principles and include provisions to regulate pecuniary and other interests. In addition, local authorities are required to put in place arrangements for dealing with complaints both about Council Members and Parish/Town Council members. Under these arrangements, local authorities must appoint at least one 'Independent Person' who must be consulted before making a decision on a Member conduct complaint. The Council has delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to handle complaints and refer an investigation finding of breach to the Hearing Panel of the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer must handle the complaints in accordance with the Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for members.

7.3. Equalities Implications

All complaints are considered with reference to the Council's Equality Scheme.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no Section 17 implications.

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain

There are no Biodiversity Net Gain implications.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The recommendations in this report do not impact on or contribute to the Council's Efficient Services priority.
Quality of Life	Delivery of an effective Standards regime supports the Council's priority of 'quality of life'
Efficient Services	The recommendations in this report do not impact on or contribute to the Council's Efficient Services priority.
Sustainable Growth	The recommendations in this report do not impact on or contribute to the Council's Efficient Services priority.

9. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee receive and note the report.

For more information contact:	Gemma Dennis Monitoring Officer gdennis@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix A – Code complaints table