

Standards Committee

4 March 2019

Code of Conduct Update

Ordinary Decision



Report of Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the Committee with an update on activity since the last meeting in respect of complaints received by Durham County Council against councillors.

Executive summary

2. The report provides at Appendix 2 a list of complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct currently being assessed and those which have been completed. Complaints are considered in accordance with the council's Local Assessment Procedure dated October 2018.
- 3 The report also informs the Committee of training provided by the Monitoring Officer.

Recommendation

- 4 Members are asked to: note the contents of the report.

Complaints

- 5 There continues to be a high volume of complaints against Councillors, although there has been a reduction since the last meeting of the Committee, with a total of 16 new complaints logged in the quarter. In respect of those received, 2 separate complaints were made against 2 Parish Councillors (COM 216-217 and COM 219-220) and 6 complaints were received in respect of 1 Parish Councillor (COM 222, COM 225, COM 226, COM 227, COM 232 and COM 235). Two further complaints were received about a Town Councillor who is the subject of local investigation (COM 223 and COM 233).
- 6 Decision notices have been issued in the period in respect of complaints ref: COM 201-202, COM 204, 208 and 210, COM 211-213, COM 214, COM 215, COM 218, COM 223 and COM 224. The outcome of each complaint is included in Appendix 2 and Members will note that complaints in respect of 2 Parish Councillors and 1 Town Councillor have been referred for local investigation (COM 201-202, COM 204, COM 208 and 210, COM 211-213, COM 223).
- 7 It would not be appropriate to comment on those complaints that are currently being assessed/investigated but Decision Notices will be available for inspection once the decision has been communicated to the Member subject to the Complaint.

Training

- 8 At the request of Waldrige Parish Council, the Monitoring Officer provided a training session on the Code of Conduct for Members on 8 January 2019.

Main implications

Legal Implications

- 9 The council has a duty under s. 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and to adopt a Code of Conduct that is consistent with the Nolan Principles. It must also have in place arrangements to consider allegations about breaches of the Codes of Conduct for Members, by the council's own members and of members of parish/town councils for which the council is the principal authority.

Conclusion

- 10 The report is intended to provide an overview of complaints handling to assist the Standards Committee to fulfil their role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct.

Background papers

- Local Assessment Procedure dated October 2018.
- Decision Notices.

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Appendix 1

Legal Implications

As outlined in the report.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.