

Standards Committee

7 June 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, with a slight increase since the last meeting of the Committee, with a total of 17 new complaints logged in the quarter up to 21 May 2019. In respect of those received, 6 separate complaints relate to Councillors of 1 Parish Council.
- 6 Thirteen Decision Notices have been issued in the period up to 21 May in respect of complaints ref: COM 196, 198, 205-206, COM 199, COM 216-217 and COM 219-220, COM 226, 227, 232 and 235, COM 236, COM 228, COM 229, COM 233, COM 238, COM 241-242, COM 245 and COM 250. The outcome of each complaint is included in Appendix 2.
- 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 The Monitoring Officer has delivered training to two new Councillors following their appointment at a local by-election.

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.