

## **Standards Committee**

**1 December 2017**



## **Code of Conduct Update**

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

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#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with an update on activity since the last meeting in respect of complaints received by Durham County Council and member training.

#### **Complaints**

2. Whilst it would not be appropriate to debate any complaint which has not yet been assessed, the Committee will wish to know the volume of complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct currently being assessed and the rate of progress in bringing complaints to a conclusion. Complaints are assessed in accordance with the Council's Procedure for Local Assessment of Complaints dated May 2016.
3. Since the last meeting of the Committee there has been almost a 50% decrease in the volume of complaints received. Attached at Appendix 2 is a table which sets out the status of those complaints which are currently regarded as live complaints or which have been completed since the last meeting of the Committee. Eight complaints have been under consideration since the last meeting. Three of them concern complaints reported at the last meeting of the Committee on 1 September 2017, one of which was withdrawn. Of the five complaints received since then, three remain under consideration, with decisions having been issued on the remaining two. The table is intended to provide an overview of complaints handling. Decision notices will also be available for member inspection.

#### **Member Training**

4. The Monitoring Officer held a training session on the Code of Conduct for all Parish and Town Councils on 3 October 2017 which was attended by representatives from 18 Parish Councils. Five Members of the Standards Committee attended a regional training session on the use of social media on 10/11 October 2017, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee observed a meeting of Newcastle City Council's Standards Committee on 13 October 2017. At the request of Cornforth Parish Council the Governance Solicitor provided Code of Conduct training to its members on 13 November 2017. Neighbouring

Parish/Town Councils Bishop Middleham and Mainsforth, Ferryhill, Chilton and Kirk Merrington were invited to the session. Two members of Bishop Middleham and Mainsforth Parish Council attended.

**Recommendation**

5. Members are asked to note the report.

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**Contact: Laura Renaudon, Governance Solicitor Tel: 03000 269886**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance - None**

**Staffing - None**

**Risk - None**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None**

**Accommodation - None**

**Crime and Disorder - None**

**Human Rights - None**

**Consultation - None**

**Procurement - None**

**Disability Issues - None**

**Legal Implications** - 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 under which allegations about breaches of the Codes of Conduct, of the Council's own members and of members of Parish/Town Councils for which the Council is the principal authority, can be investigated and decisions on allegations can be made.