

Standards Committee

5 October 2018



Code of Conduct Update

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

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.

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 June 2018.
3. Since the last meeting of the Committee held on 7 June 2018 there has been an increase in the number 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.
4. A total of 36 new complaints have been logged since the last meeting, compared to 8 in the last period. However it should be noted that of those received, 17 separate complaints were received in respect of one Town Councillor (COM 158-165, 169, 171-178), one complaint referred to the full membership of a Parish Council (COM 180-188) and four Town Councillors and one County Councillor have made individual complaints about a Town Councillor (COM 189-190, 192-194).
5. Four Decision Notices have been issued in the period, one investigation is ongoing and one complaint has been referred to the Standards Committee Hearing Panel following investigation.
6. The table is intended to provide an overview of complaints handling. Decision notices will also be available for member inspection.

Recommendation

7. Members are asked to note the report.

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Appendix 1: Implications

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.