

Blaby District Council
Grievance & Standards Committee

Date of Meeting 6 March 2025
Title of Report **Cases and Work Update**
Report Author Corporate Services Group Manager & Monitoring Officer

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 This report provides the Grievance and Standards Committee with information in relation to Member Code of Conduct complaints received since the last Standards Committee meeting. It also outlines training that has been undertaken during that period.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Grievance and Standards Committee note the contents of the report.

3. Reason for Decision(s) Recommended

- 3.1 To advise members of the committee of the Code of Conduct complaints received by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with good practice and to demonstrate good governance.

4. Matters to consider

4.1 Background

It is considered good practice to report details of Code of Conduct complaints periodically to the Committee. A summary of complaints is provided at Appendix A, so far this year a total of 36 complaints have been submitted to the Monitoring Officer.

The table in Appendix A confirms the date of the complaint, if it related to a District, Parish or Town Councillor, if the complaint was made by a member of the public, another District, Parish or Town Councillor, the nature of the complaint and any action taken to address the complaint.

The tables also confirm which cases have been discussed with the Independent Persons. The Independent Persons are appointed by Full 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.

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.

4.2 Other work

During the year, the Monitoring Officer has been available to provide support on questions raised by Councillors and Parish and Town Councillors.

The Member Development Steering Group continues to develop the Councillors training programme and the Monitoring Officer is available to support the Group.

Training on the Code of Conduct for members was held on 10 May 2023 and again on 15 February 2024. This training covered why conduct and standards matter in local government and the types of conduct covered by the Code of Conduct, to ensure that all Councillors are confident about how the Code applies to them.

Training is also scheduled for Councillors on the topic of the Member Officer protocol on March 19th. A training session for officers on the same topic is also to be arranged.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

The Government consultation on proposed changes to the Standards Regime closed on 26 February this year. The consultation sought views on proposals to introduce measures to strengthen the Standards and conduct regime. Specific proposals being consulted upon for legislative change included:

- The introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England
- A requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards committees to make decisions on code of conduct breaches and publish the outcomes of all formal investigations
- The introduction of the power for all local authorities (including combined authorities) to suspend councillors or mayors found in serious breach of their code of conduct and as appropriate, interim suspension for the most serious and complex cases that involve police investigations
- A new category of disqualification for gross misconduct and those subject to a sanction of suspension more than once in a 5 year period
- A role for a national body to deal with appeals.

A response to the consultation was submitted by Officers. Details of the consultation were circulated to all Members via the SharePoint Newsletters. Councillors were encouraged to read and respond to the consultation.

4.4 Significant Issues

Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 requires authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by elected councillors and co-opted members. Under section 28(6) the Council must also have in place arrangements under which allegations can be investigated and decisions on allegations can be made. Code of Conduct complaints received by the Monitoring Officer are dealt with in accordance with the Council's approved arrangements for dealing with such complaints in accordance with the Act.

All complaints are considered with reference to the Council's Equality Duty. In preparing this report, the author has also considered issues related to Human Rights, Human Resources and Public Health Inequalities and there are no areas of concern.

5. Environmental impact

- 5.1 No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report.

6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications. The Independent Person roles are funded through existing budgets as are external training costs.

7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

- 7.1 None identified

8. Other options considered

- 8.1 The Council is legally required to have in place arrangements under which allegations can be investigated and decisions on allegations can be made. Code of Conduct complaints received by the Monitoring Officer are dealt with in accordance with the Council's approved arrangements for dealing with such complaints in accordance with the Act.

9. Appendix

- 9.1 Appendix A – Code of Conduct Complaint Summary

10. Background paper(s)

- 10.1 None

11. Report author's contact details

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