
SUBJECT:	Complaints Monitoring Report 2016/17
REPORT OF:	Monitoring Officer
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Joanna Swift
REPORT AUTHOR	Joanna Swift
WARD/S AFFECTED	None

1. Purpose of Report

This report informs the Committee about complaints received by the monitoring officer during financial year 2016/17 that members have breached the code of conduct.

RECOMMENDATION

That the complaints information for 2016/17 is noted

2. Reasons for Recommendations

It is good practise for the Council to review the complaints received about members on a regular basis and consider any action required to address issues raised.

3. Content of Report

- 3.1 The Committee monitors complaints on an annual basis due to the historically low number of complaints made against elected and co-opted members of local authorities in Chiltern District.
- 3.2 As the Committee is aware from 1 July 2012 the responsibility for assessing, investigating and hearing complaints about member conduct was passed to principal councils under the Localism Act 2011, together with the discretion to adopt local arrangements. The Council adopted a light touch Complaints Procedure which is attached at Appendix 1 for information. Although the Localism Act removed the responsibility for South Bucks District Council to ensure high standards of conduct amongst town and parish councils in the district, any complaints that town or parish councillors may have breached their council's code of conduct are also dealt with under this complaints procedure.
- 3.3 Historically the number of formal complaints about councillors in South Bucks District has been very low. There has been an increase in complaints about SBDC councillors in the last year with the monitoring officer receiving 3 complaints, whilst complaints about town/parish councils have remained the same at 1. In each case the complainant did not pursue the matter following receipt of the monitoring officer's acknowledgement letter providing details about the behaviours covered by the code of conduct and the Stage 1 procedure for considering complaints. In 2 of the SBDC complaints the conduct referred to was not done in the councillors' official capacity and therefore fell outside the code of conduct.

3.4 The number of complaints received in 2016/17 are set out in tabular format below, together with the comparison for 2015/16.

Authority	2016/17	2015/16
SBDC	3	0
Town/Parishes	1	1
Total	4	1

3.5 In addition to the number of complaints received, it is useful to consider the type/nature of the allegations being made and this is shown in the table below. Members should note that complaints can fall into more than one category.

Nature of Allegation	Number of Allegations	
	Towns/parishes	SBDC
a) Failure to treat others with respect/bullying	2	1
b) Bringing the Council into disrepute	1	
c) Using position for personal advantage		
d) Failure to register a pecuniary interest		
e) Failure to disclose a pecuniary interest/withdraw from meeting		
f) Failure to register a non-pecuniary interest		
g) Other	1*	

* Failure to disclose a prejudicial interest and leave the room

3.6 Whilst the number of complaints has increased slightly they still remain at a low level compared to the number of councillors in the district and it has not proved necessary to proceed to Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure. However, the monitoring officer will consider a refresher on standards of behaviour and the principles of conduct in public life in future training for members.

4. Consultation

Not applicable.

5. Options

The Committee has the option of requesting more frequent reports or the provision of different statistical information in order to assist with their monitoring role.

6. Corporate Implications

Financial - None
Legal – As set out in the report
Risks issues – None
Equalities - None

7. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Whilst there is no direct link to the Council's main objectives the monitoring of complaints contributes to ensuring good governance.

Background Papers:	None except those referred to in the report
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