

QUARTERLY UPDATE ON STANDARDS COMPLAINTS

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Wards affected: All.

PROPOSED DECISION

To note the report.

Reason for Decision

To provide the Committee with an overview of complaints about Member conduct since November 2016.

Corporate Implications

1. The Localism Act 2011, Sections 26-37 and the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 set out the current legislative framework relating to standards of conduct for elected members and arrangements for handling standards complaints.
2. In order to enable Standards Committee to maintain an overview of complaints and any trends emerging, reports will be presented quarterly.

Executive Summary

3. This report provides Standards Committee with an overview of recent complaint cases.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

4. None.

Background and Issues

5. Standards Committee is presented with quarterly updates on member conduct complaints.
6. Since the most recent report to committee in November 2016, at which time there were no outstanding complaints; two complaints have been concluded as set out in Appendix 1. One of these complaints, which sought to revive an earlier withdrawn complaint, was rejected prior to the preliminary Stage 1. Another complaint has been progressed to Stage 2, at which stage it was not taken forward for investigation. As the complainant did not wish to be identified (other than to the Subject Member) the identity of both the complainant and subject member (through whom the complainant might have been identified) has been anonymised on Appendix 1.

Options

7. None, this report is for noting only.

Conclusions

8. The continuing overall small number of complaints suggests that ethical standards continue to be taken seriously by District, Town and Parish Councillors. An update Standards training session for District Council members was delivered on 29 November, which included reference to the use of social media, and some practical examples of media reports on high profile complaints about member conduct from across the country. Approximately half of the Council's Members attended this training session. Some members who were unable to attend have asked to receive an overview of the training, and this is being arranged.
9. The Council's Social Media guidelines, issued some years ago, are being reviewed and will be updated in the near future.

Next Steps

10. Further updates will be provided quarterly.

Background Papers

11. None.