

Brighton & Hove City Council

Audit & Standards Committee

Agenda Item 52

Subject: Standards Update

Date of meeting: 18 April 2023

Report of: Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources

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Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 To provide an update on Standards-related matters, including regarding complaints received in alleging that Members have breached the Code of Conduct for Members.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the report.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to have in place arrangements for dealing with complaints against elected and co-opted Members. Brighton & Hove City Council regularly reviews the arrangements it has in place, including its Code of Conduct for Members and related Procedure and guidance. It is transparent about those arrangements and also makes data regarding the complaints received in about member conduct publicly available via the reports to this Committee.
- 3.2 At Brighton & Hove City Council, the Audit & Standards Committee has delegated authority for leading in discharging the statutory requirement that the Council maintain and promote high standards of conduct by Members. This Committee receives quarterly reports on complaints against members as well as information on the training and briefings offered to assist Members in discharging their responsibilities according to the expectations of the Nolan Principles.
- 3.3 This quarterly Report provides data on the complaints received in since the last Report, as well as updates on those complaints which were still being considered/ have been determined. In this way, it provides reassurance that recent complaints are being considered and dealt with pursuant to the Council's processes.

4. Update on current complaints

Complaints previously reported to this Committee

- 4.1 In accordance with the last report to this Committee, this data is provided in the attached Appendix 1, at table 1.

Complaints received in since the last Update

- 4.2 This data is provided in table 2 of Appendix 1.
- 4.3 All of the complaints referred to in this section are being progressed by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Procedure which governs member complaints.

5. Member Training

- 5.1 Appendix 2 provides data on member attendance at Standards-related training held in the last twelve months, in accordance with the steer given at the last meeting of this Committee.
- 5.2 In the last twelve months the training offered has included:
- Code of Conduct training: three alternative refresher sessions to enable members to recap on the Council's standards arrangements and to update themselves including the modifications made in summer 2021
 - Social media and the Code of Conduct: two alternative training sessions delivered by an external trainer on the use of social media, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for those members who use social media in their roles as councillors.
 - Standards Panel training: two alternative sessions for members of the Audit and Standards Committee, delivering training mandatory for any member participating in a Standards Panel.
- 5.3 More detailed information can be provided in future regarding member attendance at training over the last four years/ during the next term should members wish it. That could include the numbers of individual members who are not recorded as having attended any training and/or a breakdown of attendance which reflects Group affiliation (if any).

6 Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 6.1 The Council is obliged under the Localism Act to make arrangements for maintaining high standards of conduct among members and to make arrangements for the investigation of complaints. This Council's arrangements are regularly reviewed. This Report draws attention to the wider picture without recommending specific options.

7 Community engagement & consultation

- 7.1 Recent reviews of the Council's Standards arrangements have been carried out by its elected Members assisted by officers and the Council's Independent Persons, whose familiarity with process in this area has been helpful. The local community has not been consulted or provided input, although this would be an option for future reviews.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this Report, which aims to assist the Council in discharging its responsibilities for overseeing that high standards of conduct are maintained in a way which is compliant with local requirements

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendation in this Report. All activity referred to has been, or will be, met from existing budgets.

Name of finance officer consulted: Nigel Manvell Date consulted 27/03/23

10 Legal implications

- 10.1 The legal implications are dealt with in the body of this Report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 1.4.23

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

Appendix 1 – data on member complaints
Appendix 2 – data on member training attendance

2. Background documents [delete if not applicable]

None

