

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Audit & Standards Committee

## Agenda Item 12

**Subject:** Standards Update

**Date of meeting:** 27th June 2023

**Report of:** Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources and Monitoring Officer

**Contact Officer:** Victoria Simpson, Senior Lawyer – Corporate Law  
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**Ward(s) affected:** All

### For general release

#### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1. To provide an update on Standards-related matters, including data on complaints alleging that Members have breached the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

#### 2. Recommendations

2.1. That the Audit & Standards Committee note the contents of this 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, which it publishes on [its website](#). It 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 both still outstanding at the time of the last Report, and those which have been received in since then. In this way, the Report seeks to provide 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. 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 under the direction of the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Procedure which governs member complaints.

#### **5. Member Training**

5.1. To assist Committee in discharging its role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, member training sessions on standards-related matters is offered in addition to the member development training run by other areas in the Council.

5.2. Since the local elections in May, there has been a focus on providing all members – including but not only those who are newly elected - with the range of tools they need to carry out their roles effectively. In this context, the following has either already been offered or is in train:

- Training on Decision-making and Governance for all members, which (amongst other things) flagged up the role of compliance with the Code of Conduct and other key expectations in generating and maintaining trust.
- Sessions focused on the Council's standards arrangements, and on how members may discharge their duties in accordance with the Code. (NB this training is a requirement for all members).

5.3. In addition, the following training will be offered to members of this Committee by the end of September 2023:

- Standards Panel training: training which is a pre-requisite for any member appointed to a Standards Panel.

5.4. Members have also been signposted to resources available from the Local Government Association, as well as the recordings of the following past session which may be of potential relevance, and which remain accessible to all members via the Council's learning platform:

- Social media and the Code of Conduct: training delivered by an external trainer in 2021 and 2022 on the use of social media which highlights the

challenges and opportunities for those members who choose to use social media in their roles as councillors.

## **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 steps taken to meet that requirement without recommending specific options.

## **7. Community engagement and consultation**

- 7.1. Past reviews of the Council's Standards arrangements (most recently in 2021) have been carried out by a working group comprised of its elected Members and the Council's Independent Persons, supported by officers who have provided stakeholder data as well as signposting relevant LGA resources. While the local community has not previously been consulted or provided input, this could 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 05/06/23

## **10. Legal implications**

- 10.1. These are covered in the body of the Report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson    Date consulted 30/05/23

## **11. Equalities implications**

- 11.1. There are no equalities implications arising from this Report, which provides reassurance on the arrangements which have been developed with the need to ensure that the Council and its members discharge their responsibilities with (amongst other things) appropriate regard for equalities considerations in mind.

## **12. Sustainability implications**

12.1. No sustainability implications have been identified.

### **13. Other Implications**

13.1. No significant other implications have been identified as arising from this Report.

### **Supporting Documentation**

#### **Appendices**

1. Appendix 1 – data on member complaints