

Brighton & Hove City Council

Audit, Standards & General Purposes Committee

Agenda Item 12

Subject: Standards Update

Date of meeting: Tuesday 25th June 2024

Report of: Corporate Director – Corporate Services

**Contact Officer: Victoria Simpson, Senior Lawyer – Corporate Law
Tel: 01273 294687
Email: Victoria.Simpson@brighton-hove.gov.uk**

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 received by the Council alleging that Members have breached the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

2. Recommendations

2.1. That this 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 & General Purposes Committee has delegated authority for leading in discharging the statutory requirement that the Council maintain and promote high standards of conduct by Members. It is proposed that this Committee (like its predecessor Committee, the Audit & Standards 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.

4. Update on Current Complaints

- 4.1. 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 in accordance with the Council's processes.
- 4.2. Members will note that – following a request made at last Committee meeting – the data supplied now provides both the date on which a complaint was received in and also that on which it was determined, this to provide additional transparency.
- 4.3. Members may further wish to note that steps are underway to refine and update the criteria against which complaints are assessed at preliminary assessment stage. It is proposed that the next meeting of this Committee be asked to review suggested amends and to consider formally approving them.

Complaints previously reported to the Council's Audit & Standards Committee

- 4.4. Complaints referred to in the last Report to this Committee but still unresolved at that time are listed in the attached Appendix 1, at table 1.

Complaints received in since the last Update to Committee

- 4.5. This data is provided in table 2 of Appendix 1. See above.
- 4.6. All of the complaints referred to in this section are being progressed by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Procedure governing 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. Very shortly after all elections and by-elections, newly elected members are offered Standards training to assist them in carrying out their roles in way which ensures that they act within the Code. This training is a requirement for all members.
- 5.3. Standards Panel training (mandatory for any member seeking to be appointed to a Standards Panel) will additionally be offered where needed.

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.

7. Community engagement and consultation

7.1. Past reviews of the Council's Standards arrangements (most recently a root and branch review in 2021) have been carried out by 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 been consulted or provided input, this remains 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 ensuring that high standards of conduct are maintained and that members act 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.

Finance officer consulted: Nigel Manvell Date consulted 30/5/24

10. Legal implications

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

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 29/05/2024

11. Equalities implications

11.1. There are not considered to be any equalities implications arising from this Report, which provides reassurance on the arrangements which have been developed with the need to ensure the Council and its members discharge their responsibilities with 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