

Brighton & Hove City Council

Audit Standards & General Purposes Committee

Agenda Item 27

Subject: Standards Update

Date of meeting: 23rd September 2025

Report of: Elizabeth Culbert, Director – Governance & Law and
Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: Name: Victoria Simpson, Senior Lawyer – Corporate Law
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 a quarterly update on complaints received in alleging that Members have breached the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and on related matters.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee agrees to note 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 reviews its arrangements regularly and publishes them on its website. It also makes data on the member complaints it has received available to members and to the public, via quarterly reports.
- 3.2. The Audit, Standards and 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. These quarterly reports on complaints against members provide transparency as well as reassurance that complaints are being considered and dealt with in accordance with the Council's processes.

4. Member complaints

Update on complaints previously reported to this Committee

- 4.1. This data is provided in Appendix 1, at table 1.

Update on new complaints received in since the last Update in June 2025

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

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Decision

- 4.4 Since the last Standards update received by this Committee, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman has published its findings in relation to a challenge to the Monitoring Officer's decision to take no action in relation to complaints E, F & G2025. The Ombudsman considered the Council's procedures and took the view that they had been properly followed.

- 4.5 An extract from the Ombudsman decision is provided below for information:

[..] 7. In this case, I am satisfied the Monitoring Officer properly considered X's complaint before deciding the issues should not be considered further. The Monitoring Officer consulted the Independent Person and took account of the evidence available before deciding not to take further action. The Monitoring Officer also explained their reasons for not formally investigating X's concerns and the decision was in line with the Council's arrangements for dealing with code of conduct complaints.

8. X disagrees with the Monitoring Officer's decision. But the Monitoring Officer was entitled to use their professional judgment to decide X's complaint should not be investigated further. As the Monitoring Officer properly considered X's concerns it is unlikely I would find fault.

Final decision

9. We will not investigate X's complaint because we are unlikely to find fault by the Council.

5. Member training

- 5.1 This Committee is aware that training and information on the Council's Standards arrangements is offered to all new and existing members. A training session for the new members elected at the May and September 2025 by-elections is currently being arranged. In addition, two (alternative) dates for refresher sessions for those existing members who have previously received training and wish to update their understanding will be offered before the end of the year. The latter will be made available to all co-opted voting members as well as to all elected members.

6 Proposed changes to the Standards Framework

- 6.1 Committee has been alerted previously to the Government's stated desire to strengthen the framework which governs the conduct of members of local authorities. A substantive response, whether in the form of proposals for

legislative change or otherwise, is still not yet available. Committee will be informed of updates as and when those become available.

7. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 7.1. 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 Report draws attention to the wider picture without recommending specific options.

8. Community engagement and consultation

- 8.1 Past reviews of the Council's Standards arrangements (most recently 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.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any activity in relation to monitoring standards and investigating complaints is met from existing budgets.

Name of finance officer consulted: Haley Woollard

Date consulted: 29/08/25

10 Legal implications

These are covered in the Report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 26/08/2025

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 The Report to members in June 2025 noted the potential for pressures on the Council's resources if the types of changes which have been mooted. However at current time this remains speculation. Any risks and their potential impacts can only be considered in a meaningful way once the proposals are fully known and understood.

12. Equalities implications

There are no 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.

13. Sustainability implications

No sustainability implications have been identified.

14. Other Implications

No other implications have been identified.

15. Conclusion

Members are asked to note the contents of this Report, which aims to assist the Council in discharging its responsibilities in this area.

Supporting Documentation

[Guidance on Member Model Code of Conduct Complaints Handling | Local Government Association](#)

[Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – data on member complaints previously reported to Committee (Table 1) and new Complaints (Table 2)