

# Standards Committee



20 October 2021

<b>Title</b>	Update on Complaints 2020 - 2021
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note
<b>Report Author</b>	Victoria Statham, Monitoring Officer
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Exempt</b>	No
<b>Exemption Reason</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Corporate Priority</b>	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Committee is asked to note the report.</b>
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	Not Applicable

## 1. Key issues

- 1.1 In accordance with the Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Member Code of Conduct, this report provides an update on complaints made from January 2020 to October 2021:
- which the Monitoring Officer has rejected;
  - which have been referred to the Assessment Panel.
- 1.2 The following table summarises the number of complaints that have been made about councillors that the Monitoring Officer has had to deal with over the period:

	Number submitted	Rejected	Closed	Referred to Assessment Panel	In process
<b>Complaints by the public</b>	11	NA	9	2	-
<b>Complaints made by staff</b>	3	NA	2	1	-
<b>Complaints by Councillors</b>	36	10	14	9	3

<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>
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- 1.3 Of the 12 complaints referred to Assessment Panel these can be broken down to:

	Investigation	No further action	Assessment Panel scheduled
Complaint by public	1	1	0
Complaints made by staff	1	0	0
Complaints by Councillors	1	7	1

- 1.4 As part of the Arrangements, the Monitoring Officer has the power to strike out complaints which are vexatious, frivolous, or politically motivated. The Arrangements are attached at Appendix 1. Please see Principles of the Arrangements para 4(e) and (f) and also paragraph 25:

*'The Monitoring Officer has power to reject complaints which are vexatious, frivolous or malicious or which are politically motivated or in some other way an abuse of process. Where the Monitoring Officer has taken a decision that a complaint falls into one of these categories, he will inform the complainant of his decision and the reasons for that decision. There is no appeal from this decision, but the Monitoring Officer will report all such decisions to the next meeting of the Standards Committee who are entitled to refer the matter for investigation if they feel that the Monitoring Officer has acted incorrectly.'*

- 1.5 The Monitoring has already reported those complaints which she has rejected to the Members' Code of Conduct Committee on 4 February 2021 and the Standards Committee on 28 July 2021. Neither Committee asked that any rejected complaints be referred for investigation. No further complaints have been rejected by the Monitoring Officer since the last report to Committee.
- 1.6 An anonymised summary of all those complaints which the Monitoring Officer rejected as politically motivated or closed for a variety of other reasons, is attached at Appendix 2.
- 1.7 One of the principles of the Arrangements is that decisions on investigations are made by councillors in an Assessment Sub-Committee (the Panel). Councillors decide if complaints are serious enough to warrant investigation. This arrangement allows members to take the lead on dealing with the conduct of other councillors and has worked well since it was introduced in July 2012 as part of the Localism Act.
- 1.8 The Council has a static low level of complaints about councillors from members of the public. During the period January 2020 to October 2021, 11 complaints were made by members of the public compared with 36

complaints by councillors. Of the complaints referred to the Assessment Sub-Committee, 2 were from the public/staff and 9 from councillors.

1.9 An anonymised summary of those complaints which were referred to the Assessment Sub-Committee is attached at Appendix 3.

## **2. Recommendation**

2.1 The Committee is asked to note this report.

### **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1 – Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the members' Code of Conduct**

**Appendix 2 – Complaints rejected by the Monitoring Officer**

**Appendix 3 – Complaints referred to the Assessment sub-Committee**