

Standards Committee

11 June 2025



Title	Update on Member Complaints
Purpose of the report	To update the Committee
Report Author	Linda Heron, Monitoring Officer
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	Not applicable
Corporate Priority	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities.
Recommendations	Committee is asked to consider the numbers and outcomes of Member complaints dealt with since 1 January 2025
Reason for Recommendation	This Committee is responsible for the promotion of high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members and assisting the Members to observe the Code of Conduct.

1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none">There have been 7 complaints under the Member Code of Conduct between 1 January 2025 - 31 May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To ensure the Committee is fully informed of recent activity
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Update the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Keep the Committee fully signed on all complaints under the Member Code of Conduct

- 1.1 This report seeks to update the Standards Committee on the numbers and outcomes of complaints about Members, received and considered under the Council's arrangements for dealing with allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 Under the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members and must adopt a code for dealing with the code of conduct matters.
- 2.2 In compliance with the duty in the Localism Act 2011 the Council had adopted Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Member Code of Conduct. These arrangements require that the Monitoring Officer report to the Standards Committee on those complaints which:
- a. The Monitoring Officer has rejected
 - b. Have been referred to the Assessment or Hearing Sub-Committee
- 2.3 On 12 February 2025 the Committee received a report on the complaints under the Member Code of Conduct received by the Monitoring Officer for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024.
- 2.4 At that time 3 complaints had been referred for independent investigation; 2 of the investigations have since concluded and the remaining one is still ongoing.
- 2.5 The investigator concluded that breaches of the Member Code of Conduct had occurred in the 2 complaints. The Standards Hearing Sub-Committee reached the findings and imposed the sanctions as follows:
- (i) Findings
Paras 1.1, 2.3, 5.1 and 8.2 of the Member Code of Conduct had been breached
 - (ii) Sanctions:
 - that the Subject Member be removed from the position of Chair of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee; and
 - A motion of censure be put to Council on 24 April 2025.
- 2.6 On 12 February 2025 the Committee also received statements from the Committee members in relation to the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee held on 17 October 2024. Subsequently the Monitoring Officer initiated a procedural review by an independent adviser. The outcome of that review is expected by the end of June 2025 and will be reported at the next Committee meeting.
- 2.7 During the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 May 2025 a total of 7 complaints have been received and these are summarised as follows:

Member of public	Failure to call Committee mtg	Dismiss – not in jurisdiction	Closed
Member of public	Comments at Committee mtg	Informal resolution – apology	Closed
Member of public	Comments on social media	Informal resolution – apology	Closed

Member of public	Comments in correspondence	Informal resolution – parties to meet & reset	Closed
Cllr	Comments at Council mtg	Ongoing	Open
Cllr	Non-disclosure of interests	Dismiss – out of time	Closed
Cllr	Comments at Council mtg	Ongoing	Open

3. Complaints rejected by the Monitoring Officer

- 3.1 One of the 7 complaints receiving during the reporting period was rejected because it did not pass Stage 2 of the complaint assessment criteria – “out of time” / received more than 3 months after the alleged breach.

4. Complaints dealt with informally by the Monitoring Officer

- 4.1 The Council’s Arrangements include provision for the Monitoring Officer to consider informal resolution at any stage in the process for dealing with a complaint, subject to meeting the criteria in Annex C to Appendix 2 of the Arrangements.
- 4.2 Three of the 7 complaints received during the reporting period were closed following agreement to an informal resolution, all by means of an apology.

5. Options analysis and proposal

- 5.1 There are no options to consider as this report informs the Committee about the complaints received and actions taken.

6. Financial management comments

- 6.1 There is a cost for engaging an investigator for complaints which proceed to a Hearing. Although a budget had been allocated, in view of the number of complaints that required further investigation to date, an unfavourable variance is expected.

7. Risk management comments

- 7.1 Poor standards of conduct by the elected members may bring the Council into disrepute and erode public confidence in the local authority and the councillors.

8. Procurement comments

- 8.1 Not applicable to this report.

9. Legal comments

- 9.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members and must adopt a code for dealing with the code of conduct matters. This report contributes to fulfilling that duty.

10. Other considerations

10.1 There are no other considerations arising directly from this report.

11. Equality and Diversity

11.1 There is no impact on equality and diversity arising from this report. The Council has adopted arrangements for dealing with allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct which ensure all complainants and subject members are treated fairly and equally.

12. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

12.1 Not applicable to this report.

13. Contact

13.1 Linda Heron, Monitoring Officer l.heron@spelthorne.gov.uk

**Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer
Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.**

Background papers: Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Member Code of Conduct.

Appendices: None