

**Code of Conduct Complaints - Status Report**

**Statutory Background**

1. All local authorities are required, by s.28 Localism Act 2011, to adopt a code of conduct for their members. All such codes are required to cover the following:
  - The principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership
  - The registration and disclosure of pecuniary and other interests
2. Wiltshire Council, as a principal authority, is required to have in place arrangements for investigating and determining allegations that a member of the Council, or a member of a parish council within the council's area, has failed to comply with the relevant Code of Conduct.
3. These arrangements must include the appointment of at least one independent person, whose views must be taken into account before a decision is made on any alleged breach of a code of conduct.

**Council Structure and Procedures**

4. Wiltshire Council's arrangements for considering complaints about alleged code of conduct breaches are set out in Protocol 12 to the Constitution. All complaints are subject to an initial assessment on behalf of the Monitoring Officer, having sought comments from the Subject Member (the councillor who is the subject of the complaint). This initial assessment may conclude that no further action should be taken; it may refer the complaint for investigation or it may recommend that an alternative resolution be explored with the parties.
5. Both parties (the Complainant and the Subject Member) have a right to a review of the initial assessment. This is considered by the Review Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee.
6. If it is determined that a formal investigation should be undertaken (either at the initial assessment stage or by the Review Sub-Committee), an investigating officer is appointed by the Monitoring Officer. If the investigating officer finds that there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct, and the Monitoring Officer on reviewing the investigation report concludes that alternative resolution is not appropriate, then a Standards Hearing Sub-Committee will be convened. This will conduct a hearing into the complaint to determine whether there has been a breach of the Code and, if so, what sanctions, if any, should be applied to the Subject Member. If the Subject Member is a member of a town or parish council, the Hearing Sub-Committee's

decision regarding sanctions will be in the form of a recommendation to the relevant council.

7. The full Standards Committee has oversight of the operation of the procedures for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints as well as a general responsibility to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted members and officers.

### **Summary of complaints received 1 April 2019 to 18 June 2019**

8. Between 01 April 2019 and 18 June 2019, the Monitoring Officer received 9 complaints under the Code of Conduct. Of these complaints, 1 concerned a member of Wiltshire Council, while the remainder of 8 were against members of town and parish councils within the authority's area.
9. Of the cases received, the current position is as follows:

Complaints currently awaiting assessment	6
No further action to be taken	3

10. There are four cases that were received before 1 April that remain to be finally determined. Two were the subject of investigations which were conducted by external investigators who are in the process of finalising their reports. One case is being considered for mediation and in one case the assessment has been delayed due to issues raised by the parties, but is expected to be completed shortly.

### **Investigations**

11. Since the beginning of June 2019, no complaints have been referred for investigation on assessment.

### **Types of Complaint**

12. The types of complaints received are categorised as follows:

Type of complaint	Number
Non-disclosure of interests/participating and voting at meetings	1
Inappropriate behaviour i.e. disrespect/bullying	3
Failure to act in the public interest	4
Failing to respond to letter/emails or to provide information/lack of communication	0
Slander/defamation of character	0
Not executing duties with honesty & integrity	0
Bribery of councillor	0

Inappropriate use of social media	1
Failure to promote high standards of conduct	0
Bringing council into disrepute	0
Conferring an advantage/disadvantage	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

### **Recommendation**

13. To note the current position on Code of Conduct Complaints

**Ian Gibbons, Director of Legal, Electoral and Registration Services (and Monitoring Officer)**

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