

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
16 January 2024

(Present) Councillors Bowden (Chair), Collier, Hawley, Maloney MBE,
McCormack and Murphy MBE.

(Not Present) Councillors Bond, Johnson, Pearl and Stevenson

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bond, Johnson, Pearl and Stevenson.

10 MINUTES

* **Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 be approved and signed.**

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

12 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2022/23

A report was presented with the Annual Review letter which the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman sent to the Leader, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Chief Executive on 19 July 2023 and was reported to the next ordinary meeting of the Standards Committee.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provided an Annual Review Letter to each Council to help inform elected members of their respective Council's performance in relation to complaints. A copy of the letter was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The Annual Review Letter provided information in relation to the number of complaints received by the LGSCO in the twelve-month period ending 31 March 2023, as well as the decisions reached by the LGSCO in the same period. Members noted that in this period, eight complaints were upheld, which, in comparison to 2021/22, was three less. This was based on a total of 11 detailed investigations for this period.

The Ombudsman reported that in 100% of cases they were satisfied the authority had successfully implemented their recommendations.

* **Resolved that the report be noted.**

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

13 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS 2022/23**

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of Ombudsman cases from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023.

The report summarised the number of complaints against the Council determined by the Ombudsman which were explained by the Monitoring Officer.

* **Resolved that the report be noted.**

14 **MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

A report was submitted which detailed the overview of the training opportunities provided to members from 1 June 2023 and 31 December 2023, and the current training/briefing on offer for the remainder of 2023/2024.

In accordance with the records held by the Organisational Design and Development Team, 10 briefing/training sessions were delivered during the period of 1 June 2023 to 31 December 2023. The sessions were attended by a total of 110 members.

The sessions were hosted via a combination of in-person and virtual events, enabling greater flexibility for officers and members.

Looking forward, there were currently six events planned for the remainder of 2023/2024.

* **Resolved that the report be noted.**

15 **UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS AGAINST ELECTED MEMBERS**

A verbal report was made by the Monitoring Officer which updated the Committee on complaints received alleging breaches of the Code of Conduct. Council had delegated powers to the Monitoring Officer to consider complaints and determine if they should be the subject of a full investigation in accordance with the agreed Procedure for Dealing with Complaints regarding breach of the Code. Since the last meeting on 10 July 2023, the Monitoring Officer had received 25 complaints against Members including Parish Councillors, which had been dealt with under delegated powers. The complaints were submitted from members of the public and councillors. Out of 25 cases, eight were concluded at stage 1 of the Procedure which the Monitoring Officer decided not to investigate in accordance with the examples listed in Appendix 1 of the Procedure. Five cases concluded at stage 2 of the Procedure by way of alternative resolution i.e. informal advice in relation to the Code of Conduct, apology, removal of social media posts or training. There were 12 complaints outstanding.

* **Resolved that the verbal update be noted.**