

Guildhall Gainsborough  
Lincolnshire DN21 2NA  
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## AGENDA

This meeting will be webcast live and the video archive published on our website

**Standards Committee**  
**Tuesday, 16th December, 2025 at 6.00 pm**  
**Council Chamber - The Guildhall**

**Members:**

- Councillor Adam Duguid (Chairman)
- Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Emma Bailey
- Councillor Trevor Bridgwood
- Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway
- Councillor Karen Carless
- Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
- Councillor Baptiste Velan

**Non- Voting Members: -**

- Mr Andrew Middleton – Independent Person
- Mr Stephen Beard – Independent Person

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Welcome and Introductions**
3. **Members' Declarations of Interest**

Members may make any declarations of interest at this point but may also make them at any time during the course of the meeting.

#### 4. **Public Report(s)**

- i) Summary of the Government response and proposed changes to Standards Regime 3 - 6
- ii) Proposed Amendments to English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - allowing the right for councillors not to publicly disclose their home addresses 7 - 14
- iii) Outcome of Audit into Code of Conduct Complaints process 15 - 18
- iv) Analysis of the Number, Nature and Outcome of Complaints received May 2025 to-date (and comparative data) 19 - 26

Paul Burkinshaw  
Head of Paid Service  
The Guildhall  
Gainsborough

Monday 8 December 2025



**Standards Committee**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December  
2025**

**Subject: Proposed changes to the current Standards regime for elected members**

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

Lisa Langdon

Lisa.langdon@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To provide an update to the Standards Committee in relation to the current regime the Council operates to process complaints made about elected members, and to inform the Standards Committee of the forthcoming changes suggested by the government as outlined in their Consultation Outcome *“Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation responses and government response”*

## **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. To note the contents of this Report and the government’s consultation outcome document in relation to the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England.

## IMPLICATIONS

### **Legal:**

The legal provisions relevant to this report are found in Chapter 7 Localism Act 2011.

### **Financial:**

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### **Staffing:**

The provision is managed by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer with the support provided by one other officer within Democratic Services.

The Localism Act 2011 provides that the authority must appoint at least one independent person whose views are to be sought, and taken into account, before it makes its decision. The Council operates with 2 Independent Persons.

### **Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:**

The Code of Conduct adopted does refer to the promotion of equalities and says elected members should not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

Complaints are dealt with in an objective manner with all parties being given the opportunity to comment, provide written views, and speak directly with the Independent Person if they so wish.

### **Data Protection Implications:**

The complaints are treated in confidence and the personal information contained within complaints is held within democratic services.

### **Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:**

None from this report

### **Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:**

None directly arising from this report

### **Health Implications:**

None directly arising from this report

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

N/A

**Risk Assessment:**

Whilst there are no direct risks arising from this Report, the promotion of the standards regime within the Council and the operation of the Standards function within Democratic Services is a control used for the Council's strategic risk "Inability for the Council's governance to support quality decision making"

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

X

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

X

**1. Background**

- 1.1 As required by the Localism Act 2011, the Council operates a regime to deal with complaints made about District and Parish Councillors. This function is overseen by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- 1.2 The Council, as required by the current regime, has adopted a Code of Conduct which applies to its elected members, and this has also been adopted by Town and Parish Councils. The Code of Conduct is consistent with the seven Nolan principles in public life. The Council has "arrangements" for dealing with complaints which explain to elected members and members of the public how we will process complaints when they made. The Code and accompanying arrangements are located on the Council's website.  
[Complain about a councillor | West Lindsey District Council](#)
- 1.3 The government is seeking to strengthen the current regime and conducted a consultation exercise in the early stage of this year. Following that exercise the government is proposing to change the current standards and conduct framework for local authorities, and intends to legislate for a whole system reform of the current regime as set out in the Localism Act 2011, such changes to include a power to suspend Councillors for a maximum of 6 months (currently the Monitoring Officer has no power to suspend or disqualify).

## **2. The Consultation Outcome**

- 2.1 The government has said that these reforms are part of a wider effort to restore public confidence in local democracy and ensure Councillors uphold higher standards of conduct.
- 2.2 The key points to take from the Consultation Outcome are that the government intends to legislate for a whole system reform and this would include a mandatory Code of Conduct, the introduction of a “right of review” within the authority, powers to suspend elected members for a maximum of 6 months for serious code of conduct breaches, with the option to withhold allowances during suspension for the most serious breaches, and the creation of a new national appeals function. The government is also intending to legislate to disqualify an elected member if they receive a 6 -month suspension twice over a 5-year period.
- 2.3 The Consultation outcome (updated 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025) can be found at [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)
- 2.4 The Monitoring Officer will continue to keep updated in respect of this situation and report changes and any further action to this Standards Committee as required.

## **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 To note the contents of this Report and the government’s consultation outcome document in relation to the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England



**Standards Committee**

**16 December 2025**

**Subject: Proposed Amendments to English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - allowing the right for councillors not to publicly disclose their home addresses**

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

Katie Storr  
Democratic and Elections Team Manager  
[Katie.storr@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:Katie.storr@west-lindsey.gov.uk)

Purpose / Summary:

To update on Proposed Amendments to English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, which would allow councillors the right not to publicly disclose their home addresses.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**That Members note the update and the current approach adopted by West Lindsey's Monitoring Officer.**

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal:**

The requirement to publish home addresses is born from the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

Proposed changes to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill may see this requirement moved.

**Financial :**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**Staffing :**

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

None

**Data Protection Implications :**

None

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:**

None

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:**

None

**Health Implications:**

None

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :****Risk Assessment :**

None



**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

**Yes**

☐

**No**

**x**

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

**Yes**

☐

**No**

**x**

## **1 Background and Introduction**

- 1.1 Under the requirements of Localism Act 2011, Elected Members are required to disclose their home address on their Member Interest form, and the Monitoring Officer is required to publish this information.
- 1.2 Elected Members can make a request to Monitoring Officers in writing, that their address isn't publicly disclosed if they believe that it could lead to them or a person connected to them being subject to violence or intimidation.
- 1.3 This requirement is in direct contrast to the requirements when standing for election, where it is the candidate's choice as to whether or not they wish to disclose their home address. However once elected, home addresses must be published.
- 1.4 The Government have recently tabled a number of amendments to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, including the right for councillors not to publicly disclose their home addresses. The Bill is anticipated to complete its remaining stages and receive Royal Assent in the first half of 2026.

## **2 Current approach at West Lindsey District Council**

- 2.1 The issue of publishing members' home addresses on their registers of interests was raised at the latest NALC National Improvement and Development Board meeting with some parish councillors having had their requests to withhold their addresses rejected by their MOs which has caused concern.
- 2.2 There had been discussion about the importance of explaining to parish and town councils within your area where and why home addresses would be published and making their right to request that their address isn't publicly disclosed (if they believe doing so could lead to them or a person connected to them being subject to violence or intimidation.)
- 2.3 West Lindsey District Council, as standard, when issuing interest forms make it very clear to Parish Clerks how, where and why the information provided will be published. See attached appendix.
- 2.4 The Monitoring Officer looks favourably on all requests received to withhold information, with no requests declined to date.
- 2.5 Should the amendment to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill be enacted, the Monitoring Officer will communicate this fact to all Elected Members across the District and take appropriate action

- 3.1 That Members note the update and the current approach adopted by West Lindsey's Monitoring Officer.

To: All Parish Clerks

It has been brought to our attention that not all Parish Councillors are aware that, when taking on the role of a Parish Councillor, their Register of Interests form is published on our website (ie) it is a public document. It is a legal duty that we publish these Interests.

It would be most helpful if, when you provide your Parish Councillors with a Register of Interests form, you advise them that this will be out for public consumption, and signpost them to the Government publication (link below).

**It is also important that their forms are kept up-to-date, should there be a change in circumstances (ie) change of address/name, job, investments /shares, ownership of properties/land etc. If you would remind your Councillors please to check that their forms are updated it would be greatly appreciated.**

A useful link to Government publications on Openness and Transparency on Personal Interest Guidance for Councillors is :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/openness-and-transparency-on-personal-interests-guidance-for-councillors>

This link can be found on our website – on “Becoming a Councillor” page: <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-council/my-councillors/becoming-a-councillor/>

Many thanks

Regards

## **Draft for a generic reply to parish cllrs wanting their details redacting**

Thank you for your email outlining your concerns with your Register of Interests being published on our website. However, the reasons for this are given below:

### **Register of Interests Form:**

On taking up Office, Councillors/Parish Councillors, are required to complete a register of disclosable pecuniary interests. This is a legal requirement and legislation sets out what must be on that form as a minimum; this does include home addresses and all properties/land the councillor owns or rents in the parish including the property they reside in, as well as their "trade/occupation".

### **GDPR:**

Councillors may be concerned that this is a breach of GDPR but as there is legal requirement to both provide and publish the data no permission is needed, as such this process is exempt for GDPR. Taking Office is the consent, as once in office the requirements of the Localism Act apply.

### **Legislation:**

Legislation sets out that the Monitoring Officer must make this information publicly available and West Lindsey fulfils this requirement by using the website. Discussions are ongoing at a National Level but until such time as the law changes, it is a requirement for this information to be published unless the sensitive test is reached and approved by the Monitoring Officer.

### **Sensitive Information:**

Parish Councillors, may write to the Monitoring Officer setting out their case as to why their information should be removed, but I must again stress to be fully compliant with the law as it currently stands, there are limited circumstances. In some authorities Monitoring Officers have taken a view, in the absence of waiting legislation, that all addresses will be treated as sensitive, a "blanket policy". WLDC does not currently operate a blanket policy.

A Councillor's register of interest may only be withheld from the public, if the interest is deemed sensitive and may lead to threats of violence, comprise security, examples being working for the prison service, working for intelligence services, being on a witness protection scheme. It is the Monitoring Officer who determines if it is sensitive.

We do regularly write to Parish Clerks to ensure their Members are aware of this, and to advise they must contact the Monitoring Officer if they have genuine concerns around safety arising from publication of the information so that exemptions can be granted.

### **Useful links and information:**

Attached is a legal briefing note on this matter that you may find useful. Sections 21 – 24 outline the register of interest requirements and the legislation which deals with this.

A useful link to Government publications on Openness and Transparency on Personal Interest Guidance for Councillors is :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/openness-and-transparency-on-personal-interests-guidance-for-councillors>

This link can also be found on our website – on “Becoming a Councillor” page: <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-council/my-councillors/becoming-a-councillor/>

Having now had further information as to how and why this data is published, you may wish to consider whether you feel an approach should be made to the Monitoring Officer for an exemption to be applied, should you feel you meet the criteria in accordance with the requirements of the legislation.

We hope that this information clarifies matters for you.



**Standards Committee**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December  
2025**

**Subject: Outcome of Audit for Code of Conduct Complaints process**

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

Lisa Langdon

[Lisa.langdon@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:Lisa.langdon@west-lindsey.gov.uk)

Purpose / Summary:

To update the Standards Committee on the findings of the Audit conducted into Code of Conduct Complaints process

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. To note the contents of this report.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal:**

No legal implications

**Financial:**

The internal Audit Service has been contracted to RSM LLP and is within the budget for 2024/25.

**Staffing:** None directly arising from this report

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:**

None directly arising from this report

**Data Protection Implications:**

None directly arising from this report

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:**

None from this report

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:**

None directly arising from this report

**Health Implications:**

None from this report

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

N/A

**Risk Assessment:**

N/A

**Call in and Urgency:**



**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

X

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

X

**1. Background**

- 1.1 RSM LLP provide the Internal Audit Service for the Council and as part of the Audit plan for the year 2024/25, they have conducted an Audit in relation to the Code of Complaints process. The complaints process is administered within Democratic Services and is overseen by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer with support from one other officer within that team. The Audit was concluded in January 2025 and found "Reasonable Assurance" within the process. As is usual for Audit findings, the outcome and associated actions were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee earlier this year.
- 1.2 The Audit found that the Council's procedures are aligned with the Code of Conduct, which is based upon the national model and the Nolan principles of good governance. It was noted that the Monitoring Officer received guidance and updates through forums such as Lawyers in Local Government, and the East Midlands Lawshare forum both of which provide updates and training in relation to standards matters. The Audit found that Councillors are provided with training in relation to the Code of Conduct as part of their onboarding and that in all cases decisions were taken in conjunction with an Independent Person (as is required).
- 1.3 The three members of staff involved in the process meet regularly, and a spreadsheet is maintained of the complaints which are received. A report is taken to the full Council meeting once a year which identifies emerging themes in relation to complaints.

**2. Audit actions**

- 2.1 The audit did propose some 2 medium level actions which have been accepted. These relate to the timeframes in relation to responding to complaints and are as follows:
- Management will investigate and identify whether timescales in the complaints handling process or processes to complete responses need amendment to ensure that complaints are being adhered to in a realistic timeframe.

- The Council are to investigate and if necessary, implement a formal timescale extension process where they are unable to meet the 20-day timescale for consultation. Where an extension is necessary, notification is made to the complainant.

2.2 The Audit also indicated some low priority actions such as ensuring training requirements for the 3 officers involved is monitored, and making some minor amendments to the existing spreadsheet of complaints.

2.3 The Monitoring Officer has reviewed the process and made the proposed changes.

### **3. Recommendation**

3.1 To note the contents of this report.



**Standards Committee**

**16 December 2025**

**Subject: Analysis of the Number, Nature and Outcome of Complaints received during the current civic year (1 May 2025 to 30 November 2025) (and comparative data)**

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

Katie Storr  
Democratic and Elections Team Manager  
[Katie.storr@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:Katie.storr@west-lindsey.gov.uk)

Purpose / Summary:

This report presents a data analysis of the number, nature and outcome of complaints received under the Code of Conduct Complaint Process for the current civic year to-date (May 2025 to 30 November 2025).

The report also includes comparative data for the same period (May 2024- 30 November 2024).

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- 1) That Members note the statistical data presented within the report; and**
- 2) That Members receive a further report on the number, nature and outcome of complaints at the end of the civic year.**

## IMPLICATIONS

### **Legal:**

The Council is required under the Localism Act 2011 to have a process by which Code of Conduct complaints will be dealt with.

It is considered best practice to report publicly periodically the number and nature of complaints received via this process.

### **Financial :**

None arising from this report

### **Staffing :**

This function is overseen by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Deputy Monitoring Officer, and an Independent Person must be consulted on all complaints.

### **Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

None

### **Data Protection Implications :**

This report includes no personal details, and presents high level generic complaint data

### **Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:**

None

### **Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:**

None

### **Health Implications:**

None

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :**

**Risk Assessment :**

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

**Yes**

☐

**No**

**x**

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

**Yes**

☐

**No**

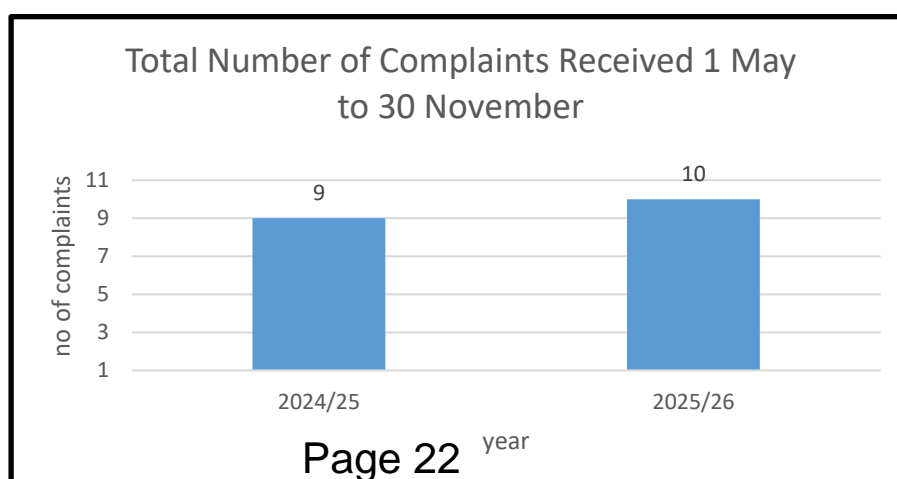
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## 1. Background and Introduction

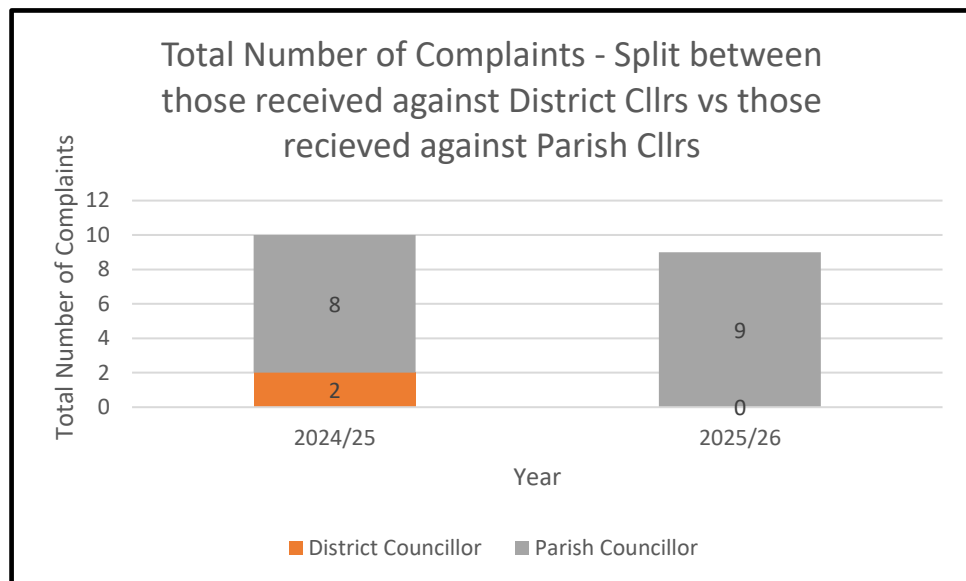
- 1.1 As required by the Localism Act 2011, the Council operates a regime to deal with complaints made about District and Parish Councillors. This function is overseen by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Deputy Monitoring Officer, and an Independent Person must be consulted on all complaints.
- 1.2 The Council has published “arrangements” for dealing with complaints which explain to elected members and members of the public how we will process complaints when they made. The Code and accompanying arrangements are located on the Council's website. [Complain about a councillor | West Lindsey District Council](#)
- 1.3 It is considered good practice to report at least annually on the number and nature of the complaints received and in recent years, this information has been included in the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report presented to Annual Council each year.
- 1.4 Following changes in accordance with guidance to ensure Standards Committee is a stand-alone committee, it is intended to report information to the Standards Committee, on the number and nature of the complaints received at least twice per civic year.
- 1.5 This report sets out statistical information for the civic year to-date (1 May to 30 November 2025)
- 1.6 The report also includes comparative data for the same period (May 2024- 30 November 2024) to assist in identify any apparent trends.

## 2 Summary of Number, Nature and Outcome of Complaints received during the Current Civic Year (1 May – 30 November 2025) in comparison to the same period for the previous year.

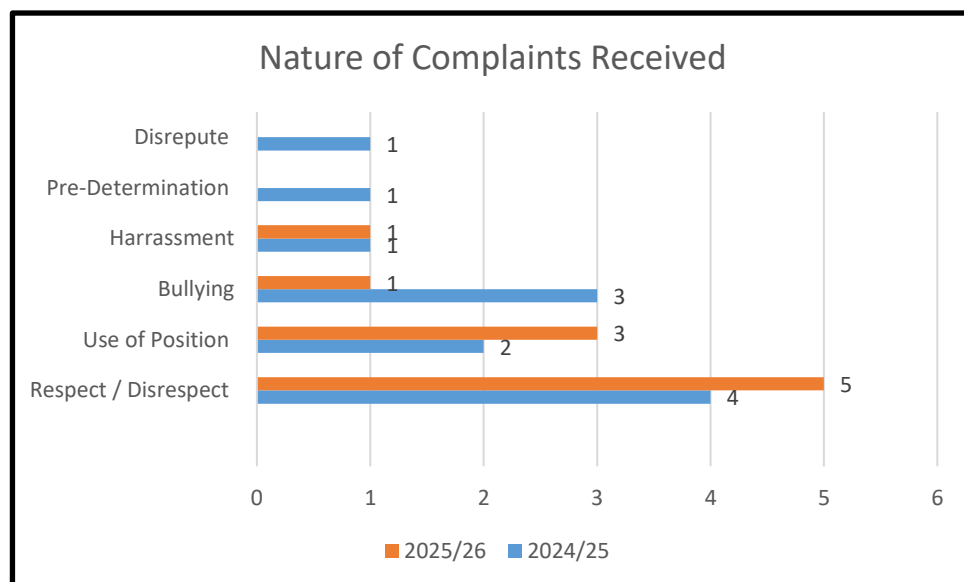
- 2.1 To-date during the 2025/26 Civic Year a total of 9 formal complaints have been received through the Code of Conduct Complaints process, this compares to a total of 10 having been received for the same period the previous year.



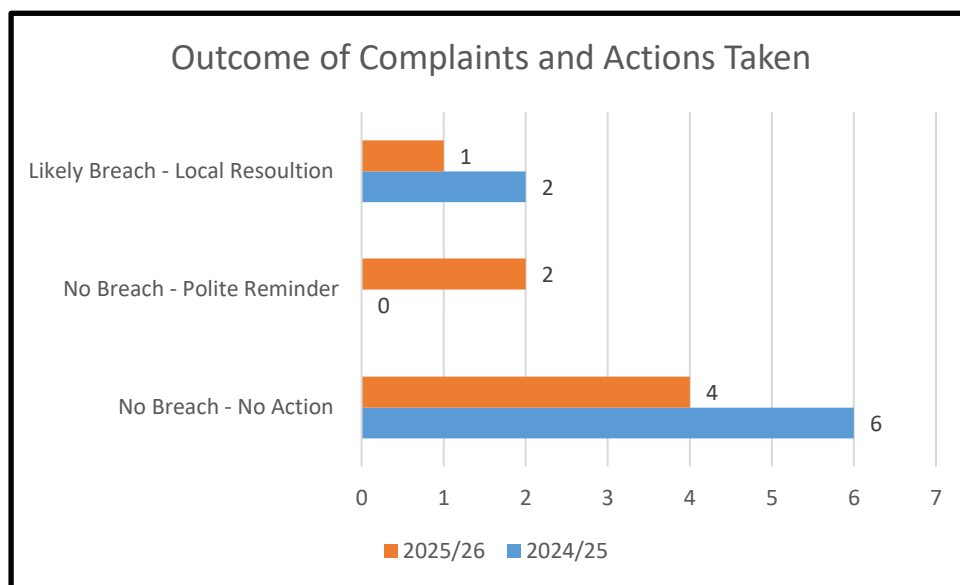
- 2.2 The next charts shows the split between complaints received against District Councillors and Parish Councillors.



- 2.3 The next chart sets out the nature of those complaints received this civic year to-date, when compared to the same period the previous year. By nature, its meant, which paragraphs of the Code did the complainant allege had been breached.



- 2.4 It should be noted Officer interpretation is used when categorising the complaints and complainants often raise more than one issue, hence why the numbers in the nature of complaints received may be higher than the total number of complaints received.
- 2.5 The chart below shows the action taken in respect of each complaint received during this civic year to-date, when compared to the same period the previous year.



Note: During 2024/25 of the 10 complaints referenced – 1 complaint was withdrawn before completion – so no action taken, and one councillor resigned on receiving the complaint so no action was taken (they do not show in the above graph)

During 2025/26 of the 9 complaints referenced 2 are still awaiting an outcome meeting and therefore do not show in the above graph.

No investigations were commissioned in either year.

### 3. Current approach

- 3.1 The Code is enforced with the ethos of good governance, openness, transparency and the 7 Nolan principles, underpinning any decisions made. Local and informal resolution is always used wherever possible. This is particularly important due to the imposable sanctions being limited. Complaints are only to be released into the public domain, when all forms of local and informal resolutions have failed and therefore this report provides high level information only rather than specifics.
- 3.2 Complaints regarding respect, bullying and harassment, are considered within a threshold of tolerance, with less tolerance applied for complaints regarding behaviour towards the public or very public acts.
- 3.3 That being said, the Code is not intended to stifle the cut and thrust of political debate, nor to enable malicious, petty, politically or personally motivated complaints to be pursued. This can be demonstrated by the limited number of complaints being pursued to formal investigation.
- 3.4 In some cases it is evident neither an Investigation or a Hearing will offer any further resolution, and a pragmatic approach is adopted. The Authority is focussed on trying to achieve an outcome, and change in behaviour and will pursue this option over a hearing wherever possible.



Resources are therefore allocated to activities which it is hoped will result in outcomes.

- 3.5 Investigations are costly, and time consuming and with imposable sanctions being limited, this is arguably not a cost effective use of public funds. That being said costs would not prevent the most serious cases being further investigated and the public interest is also considered.
- 3.6 The Code aims to respect a Councillor's right to a private life; however, it is important to understand that the public, particularly in small communities, will never see their elected Members as off duty. In such cases elected Members are issued with polite reminders as to the impact their behaviour could have on the reputation of local democracy but no further action can legally be taken.

#### **4 Trends Summary**

- 4.1 On the whole the number of complaints remains low and comparable to the same period the previous year.
- 4.2 We continue to receive more complaints against Parish Councillors than District Councillor, but this is to be expected given there are circa 700 parish councillors compared to 36 District Councillors.
- 4.3 The main reason for complaints continues to be respect, bullying and Harassment. This is a subjective matter and the threshold for Member-to-Member interactions is considered to be a much higher threshold than the average member of public.
- 4.4 Social media continues to feature regularly in a number of complaints.
- 4.5 The majority of complaints still result in a "no breach" determination being made at the initial assessment stage. This is primarily as result of complaints relating to behaviour in a Councillor's private capacity, relating to procedural issues or having been deemed to not meet the threshold.
- 4.6 Over the period a number of informal reminders about behaviour have been issued and one Local Resolution Sanction of an Apology has been applied. The Monitoring Officer has also offered three general training sessions to Parish Councillors regarding the Code of Conduct and the complaint process.
- 4.7 The independent people will be present at the meeting and may wish to share their views of the assessment process and trends seen particularly in recent months

- 1) That Members note the statistical data presented within the report; and
- 2) That Members receive a further report on the number, nature and outcome of complaints at the end of the civic year.