



Standards Committee

23 June 2026

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

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Executive 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 civic year 2025/2026 (1 May 2025 to 30 April 2026).

The report also includes comparative data for the same period (1 May 2024-30 April 2025).

Appendices to Report

- None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

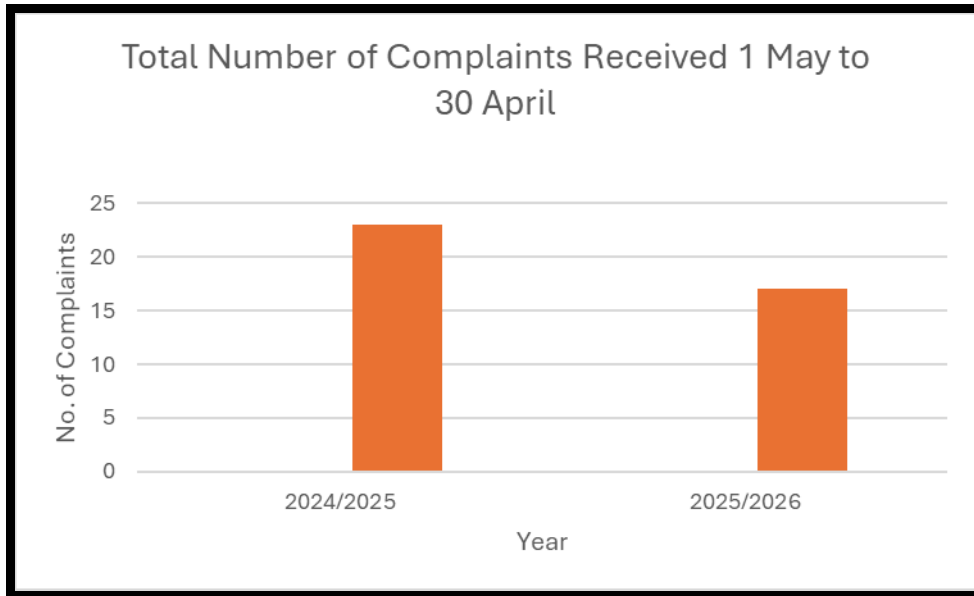
- (1) That Members note the statistical data presented within the report; and**
- (2) That Members receive a mid-year report on the number, nature and outcome of complaints at their meeting in December 2026.**

1. Background and Introduction

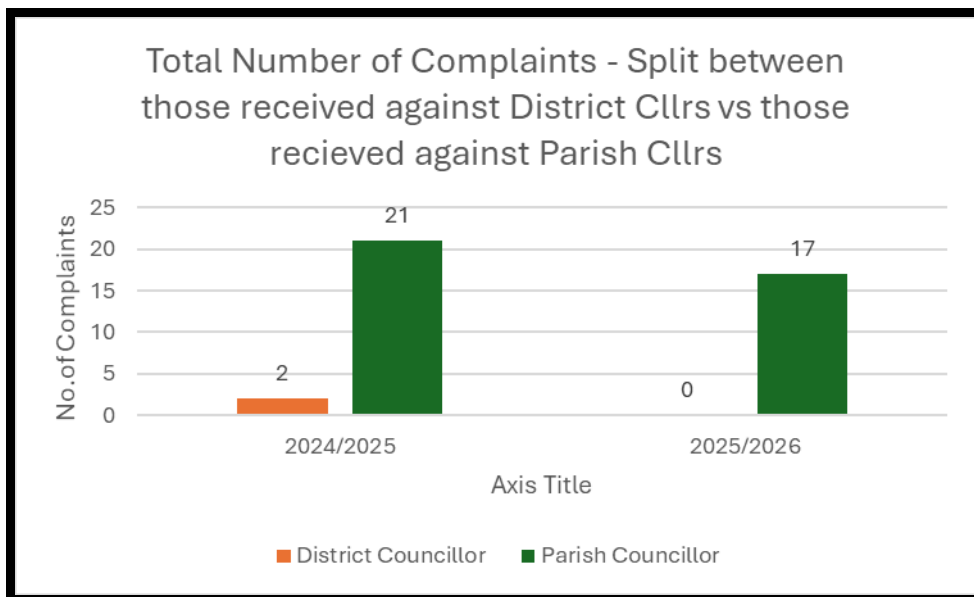
- 1.1 As required by the Localism Act 2011, the Council operates a regime to deal with complaints made about District and Parish Councillors. This function is overseen by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Deputy Monitoring Officer, and an Independent Person must be consulted on all complaints.
- 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 this information directly to the Standards Committee.
- 1.5 Members last received a report on the number and nature of complaints at their meeting in December 2025, which set out statistical information for the 2025/26 civic year to-date, which covered the period 1 May to 30 November 2025.
- 1.6 This report sets out statistical information for the entire civic year 2025/2026 (1 May 2025 to 30 April 2026) alongside comparative data for the same period (1 May 2024- 30 April 2025).

2 Summary of Number, Nature and Outcome of Complaints received during the 2025/2026 Civic Year (1 May 2025 – 30 April 2026) in comparison to the same period for the previous year.

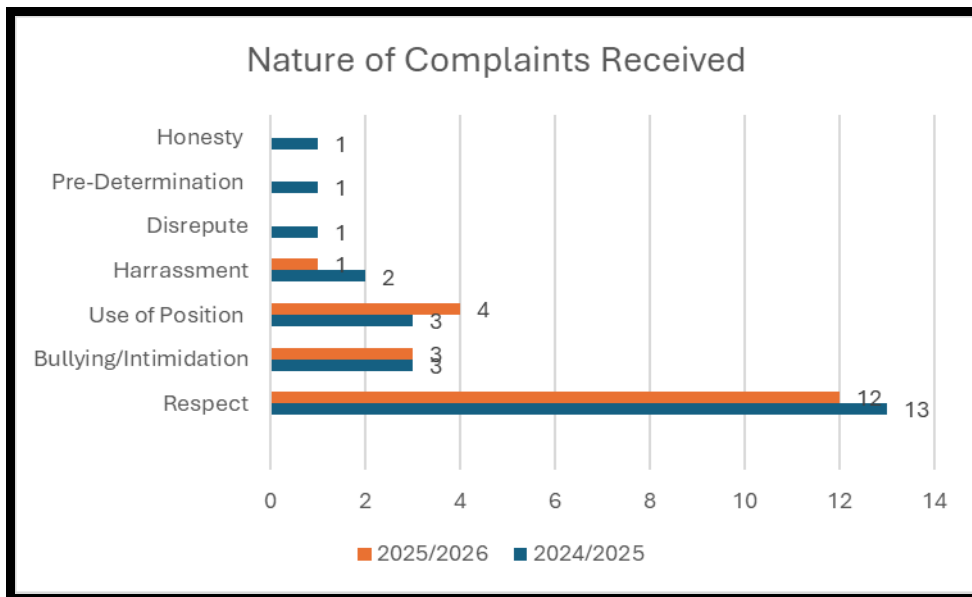
- 2.1 During the 2025/26 Civic Year a total of 17 formal complaints have been received through the Code of Conduct Complaints process, this compares to a total of 23 having been received for the same period the previous year.



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

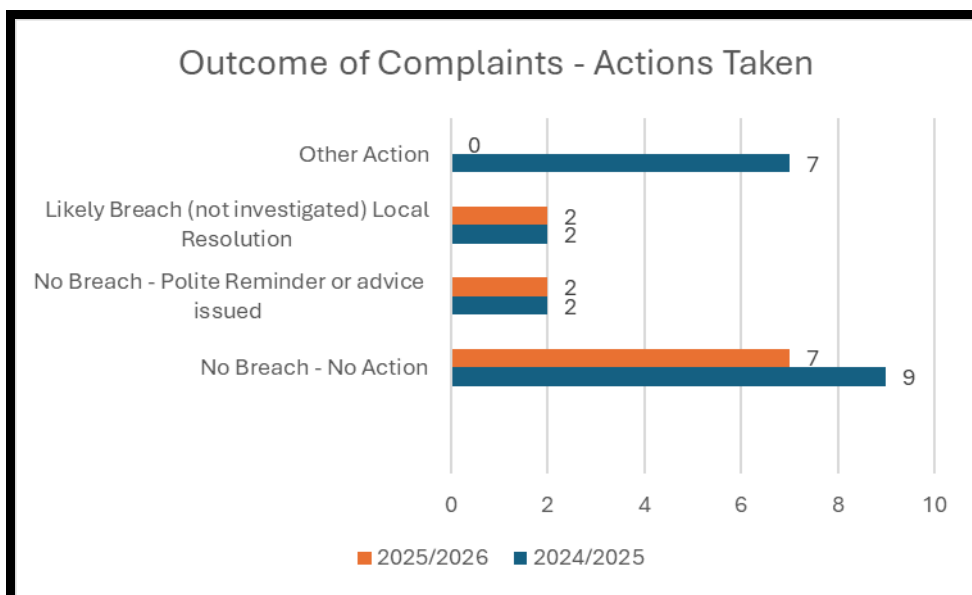


2.3 The next chart sets out the nature of those complaints received during the 2025/2026 civic year, when compared to the 2024/2025 the civic year. By nature, its meant, which paragraphs of the Code did the complainant allege had been breached.



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 the 2025/2026 civic year, when compared to the same period the previous year.



Note: During 2024/25 of the 23 complaints referenced – 2 complaints were withdrawn before completion – so no action taken, and one councillor resigned on receiving the complaint, so no action was taken (these are not shown in the above graph)

During 2025/26 of the 17 complaints referenced, 1 complaint was withdrawn before completion and 5 are still pending an outcome meeting and therefore do not show in the above graph.

2.6 No investigations have been 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 impossible sanctions being limited.

3.2 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.

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

3.4 Investigations are costly, and time consuming and with impossible sanctions being limited, this is arguably not a cost-effective use of public funds. The public interest will be considered, however resource implications would not prevent the most serious cases being further investigated. Each complaint is dependant on its own facts and circumstances.

3.5 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, may 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 in these situations.

3.6 Where a complaint may highlight potential criminal behaviour the Monitoring Officer supports complainants in making a complaint to the Police should they wish to do so.

4 Trends Summary

4.1 On the whole the number of complaints remains low and comparable to the same period the previous year, with a slight reduction noticed

4.2 We continue to receive more complaints against Parish Councillors than District Councillors, but this is to be expected given there are circa 700 parish councillors compared to 36 District Councillors. The

presence of Group structures with District Councils can also help ensure that matters can be resolved informally before a formal complaint is made.

- 4.3 The main reason for complaints continues to be respect, bullying and mis-use of position.
- 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 Local Resolutions sought were appropriate.
- 4.7 Having received a considerable number of complaints from one Parish Council (8) in a very short space of time the Monitoring Officer and her staff did commission a facilitated session between Councillors and Officers, in an attempt to help the situation..
- 4.8 The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer will be attending the Annual Conference of the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils in July 2026 to provide a speaking table on standards and elections issues generally, and also to meet with Parish Clerks and Councillors to understand current developments and any future concerns within the town and parish sector.

5 Role of the Independent Person

- 5.1 Under the Localism Act 2011 local authorities must appoint at least one Independent Person (IP) to undertake the role specified in the Act. This is a mandatory requirement, and an IP must be consulted on all formal complaints received against elected members.
- 5.2 Best practices suggest local Authorities should appoint at least two but there are no limits on the number of IPs a Council may appoint.
- 5.3 During the latter half of 2025/2026, West Lindsey District Council ran a successful recruitment process for IPs and were fortunate to receive a number of high calibre applications.
- 5.4 Given historic issues in recruiting to this position, the debilitating impact on the Council’s ability to operate in the absence of an IP, and an opportunity to afford additional flexibility, it was considered prudent to make provisional offers of appointment and Council at its meeting on 13 April approved the appointment of 3 IPs, bringing the total co-hort to 4, as detailed below.

Standards I P	Term of Office	Expires
Mr Stephen Beard	4 years	May 2030
Mr Andrew Middleton	4 Years	May 2028
Mr Shawn Lewis	4 years	May 2030
Mr Phil Jones	4 years	May 2030

5.5 Highly parished Districts are also recommended to consider appointing a non-voting volunteer Parish Council representative to their Standards Committee, Councillor Stephen Riley of Grasby Parish Council, currently carries out this function for West Lindsey District Council having been appointed by Full Council in November 2025.

6 Alternative Options

	Option	Rational for not recommending
1	To not present complaints data annually	This would not be in accordance with best practice and would not allow councillors to consider trends to enable targeted resources.

ASSOCIATED 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.

WLDC has committed to report this data twice per year.

Financial:

None arising from this report

Staffing:

This function is overseen by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Deputy Monitoring Officer. An Independent Person is consulted on all complaints in accordance with legislative requirements.

LGR implications:

N/A

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

Risk Assessment:

N/A

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

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