

Brighton & Hove City Council

Audit & Standards Committee

Agenda Item 26

Subject: Standards Update

Date of meeting: 26th September 2023

Report of: Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources and
Monitoring Officer

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1. To provide an update on Standards-related matters, including data on complaints alleging that Members have breached the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Audit & Standards Committee note the contents of this report.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1. The Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to have in place arrangements for dealing with complaints against elected and co-opted Members. Brighton & Hove City Council regularly reviews the arrangements it has in place, including its Code of Conduct for Members and related Procedure and guidance. It is transparent about those arrangements, which it publishes on [its website](#). It also makes data regarding the complaints received in about member conduct publicly available via the reports to this Committee.
- 3.2. At Brighton & Hove City Council, the Audit & Standards Committee has delegated authority for leading in discharging the statutory requirement that the Council maintain and promote high standards of conduct by Members. This Committee receives quarterly reports on complaints against members as well as information on the training and briefings offered to assist Members in discharging their responsibilities according to the expectations of the Nolan Principles.
- 3.3. This quarterly Report provides data on the complaints both still outstanding at the time of the last Report, and those which have been received in since then. In this way, the Report seeks to provide reassurance that recent

complaints are being considered and dealt with pursuant to the Council's processes.

4. Update on Current Complaints

Complaints previously reported to this Committee

- 4.1. In accordance with the last report to this Committee, this data is provided in the attached Appendix 1, at table 1.

Complaints received in since the last Update

- 4.2. This data is provided in table 2 of Appendix 1.
- 4.3. All of member complaints referred to in this section are being/ have been progressed by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Procedure which governs member complaints.

5. Member Training

- 5.1. To assist Committee in discharging its role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, member training sessions on standards-related matters is offered in addition to the member development training run by other areas in the Council.
- 5.2. Following the local elections in May 2023, there was a particular focus on providing all elected members – including but not only those who were new - with the tools they needed to carry out their roles effectively, within the Code. This included offering sessions focused on the Council's standards arrangements and on how members are expected to discharge their duties in accordance with the Code of Conduct. This training is a requirement for all members and will be repeated before the end of 2023.
- 5.3. In addition, Standards Panel training (mandatory for any member seeking to be appointed to a Standards Panel) is also planned for this period.

6. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 6.1. The Council is obliged under the Localism Act to make arrangements for maintaining high standards of conduct among members and to make arrangements for the investigation of complaints. This Council's arrangements are regularly reviewed. This Report draws attention to the wider picture without recommending specific options.

7. Community engagement and consultation

- 7.1. Past reviews of the Council's Standards arrangements (most recently in 2021) have been carried out by its elected Members and the Council's Independent Persons, supported by officers who have provided stakeholder data as well as signposting relevant LGA resources. While the local

community has not been consulted or provided input, this could be an option for future reviews.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. Members are asked to note the contents of this Report, which aims to assist the Council in discharging its responsibilities for overseeing that high standards of conduct are maintained in a way which is compliant with local requirements.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendation in this Report. All activity referred to has been, or will be, met from existing budgets.

Name of finance officer consulted: James Hengeveld
Date consulted 18/09/23

10. Legal implications

- 10.1. These are covered in the body of the Report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 06/09/23

11. Equalities implications

- 11.1. There are no equalities implications arising from this Report. It provides reassurance on the arrangements which have been developed with the need to ensure the Council and its members discharge their responsibilities with appropriate regard for equalities considerations in mind.

12. Sustainability implications

- 12.1. No sustainability implications have been identified.

13. Other Implications

- 13.1. No significant other implications have been identified as arising from this Report.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – data on member complaints

