

Report of	Meeting	Date
Monitoring Officer	Standards Committee	Thursday, 21 December 2023

Standards Update

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	No
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Purpose of the Report

- To update members on the operation of the Standards Regime for the year 2023.

Recommendations

- That members note the report.

Reasons for recommendations

- The report updates members on the complaints received against councillors and how they have been progressed. It enables members to consider any areas of concern over behaviours and focus any work planning.

Other options considered and rejected

- None.

Corporate priorities

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (Please bold one)

An exemplary council	Healthy and happy communities
Opportunities for everyone	Green and clean neighbourhood

Background to the report

- South Ribble Council Standards Committee have undertaken a significant amount of work in the last few years to support members in improving standards of behaviour. These issues were acknowledged by councillors and referenced by External Audit as an area for improvement which will enable the council to best meet its objectives and

support clear and robust decision making. Councillors would be better placed to challenge appropriately and raise concerns over decisions based on the facts and issues before them in a respectful manner.

7. A lengthy review of Code of Conduct has been completed and training provided to all members. The Chair and Vice Chair have supported the Monitoring Officer in embedding the new code and the Committee as a group have led on the improvements.
8. This report will confirm the number and nature of the complaints received in relation to member behaviour and will advise members of any specific areas of concern.

Complaints Received

9. There have been a total of 4 councillors complained about. There have been 6 complaints received, although on 2 occasions 2 complaints were received about the same incident. None of the complaints received have been referred to investigation with 2 incidents being resolved by a letter of apology and personal explanation and 1 by way of a conversation between the Monitoring Officer and the relevant councillor.
10. One complaint has been received recently, is being processed and remains unresolved at this point.
11. There are no patterns of behaviour that can be identified as requiring special attention by the Standards Committee.

Generally

12. It has been observed that the general approach and behaviours exhibited at meetings has improved. Debates on council business are generally confined to the issues with members focussing on the principles of the decision and not usually any personal conflicts.
13. There are still occasional disagreements but these are now dealt with through the debate and resolved by members rather than through standards complaints.
14. One of the areas of complaint, which was not viewed as a breach of the code and not proceeded with, related to the use of Social Media. This has been identified as an improvement area and there is a report on this agenda to recommend a review of the Social Media Protocol.

Climate change and air quality

15. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

16. There are no implications.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

17. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

18. There are no specific issues to raise other than what is already set out in the report. The importance of having a sound standards regime is self-evident – without it the reputation of the council can be damaged.

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