

<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Legal And Governance Services Executive Member for Legal And Governance Services
-------------------	---

<b>Submitted to:</b>	Standards Committee
----------------------	---------------------

<b>Date:</b>	3 April 2023
--------------	--------------

<b>Title:</b>	Quarterly update report to Standards Committee
---------------	--

<b>Report for:</b>	Discussion
--------------------	------------

<b>Status:</b>	Public
----------------	--------

<b>Strategic priority:</b>	Quality of service
----------------------------	--------------------

<b>Key decision:</b>	No
----------------------	----

<b>Why:</b>	Report is for information only
-------------	--------------------------------

<b>Urgent:</b>	No
----------------	----

<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable
-------------	----------------

### **Executive summary**

This report provides a quarterly update to the Standards Committee in regards to the recent and current position concerning Code of Conduct Complaints so that the committee has assurance about the practice and process.

The report also seeks to identify any themes in regards to complaints and suggest possible steps to address any issues.

## Purpose

1. To provide information only by way of a quarterly update to the Standards Committee in regards to the recent and current position concerning Code of Conduct Complaints so that the committee has assurance about the practice and process.

## Background and relevant information

2. This report is provided to committee members to give an overview of the current, and recent position in regards to the Code of Conduct complaints received.

Year (Jan-Dec)	Total complaints	Member on Member	Other on Member (ie member of public, officer)	No. withdrawn/ not progressed by complainant	No. rejected	No. resolved informally	No. to investigation	No. to standards Committee after investigation
2019	27	9	18	4	9	10	4	3
2020	31	4	27	17	13	1	2	1
2021	33	13	20	2	4	19	4	1
2022	12	3	9	2	4	2	0	0
2023 (to date)	29	4	25	0	9	0	0	0

3. There is 1 complaint from 2020, 4 complaints from 2021, and 4 ongoing from 2022 at various stages of the process which have not yet concluded. We are unable to give any specifics about those complaints at this time so as not to prejudice any outcomes, and/or create a conflict should any of those complaints need to come to Standards Committee at a future date. **TOTAL OUTSTANDING PRE 2023 - 9**
4. Since the last quarterly update, 1 further complaint from 2022 has been rejected. This is reflected in the table above.
5. There have been 29 complaints submitted to date in 2023. Of the 29 complaints, there have been 9 complaints rejected further to the assessment criteria. **TOTAL OUTSTANDING 2023 – 20.**
6. As per the table above, there has been a significant increase in complaints in the first quarter of this year, with 29 received to date, compared to a total of 12 in 2022, and 27, 31 and 33 for 2019-2021 respectively for the full year.
7. The internal resource to deal with the complaints is provided by the legal services team, primarily the Monitoring Officer and two Deputy Monitoring Officers. Senior officers may also be tasked to complete an investigation where required.
8. A significant increase in complaints will of course mean that legal resource is diverted away from other areas.

9. Of the 29 complaints received to in 2023 to date, 23 of them involved the inappropriate use of social media in some capacity. In order to try and address this issue, we propose that:
- a) Within 7 days of this meeting an advice and guidance email is sent by the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer to all current members reminding them of the guidance around social media use with reference to the Code of Conduct.
  - b) Within 14 days of this meeting a meeting is held between group leaders and the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer to discuss the issue and seek support around trying to address it.
  - c) Within 28 days post election a training session will be carried out with newly elected members focussing specifically on guidance around social media use.

**What decision(s) are being recommended?**

10. To note the contents of the report.

**Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

11. N/A

**Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended**

12. N/A

**Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**

***Legal***

13. There is no legal impact.

***Strategic priorities and risks***

14. Not applicable.

***Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection***

15. There are no issues of equality and diversity.

***Financial***

16. There is no financial impact.

**Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)**

17. Report is for information only.

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline

## Appendices

1	
---	--

## Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

**Contact:** Charlotte Benjamin  
**Email:** charlotte\_benjamin@middlesbrough.gov.uk