

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	Director of Legal and Governance Services - Charlotte Benjamin
Relevant Executive Member:	Mayor Chris Cooke
Submitted to:	Standards Committee
Date:	14 July 2025
Title:	Quarterly Update Report to Standards Committee
Report for:	Information
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	No
Why:	Report is for information only
Subject to call in?	No
Why:	This report is for information to the Standards Committee

Executive summary

This report provides a quarterly update to the Standards Committee regarding the current position concerning Code of Conduct Complaints, and to identify any trends or patterns in regards to the type of complaints being received.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

- 1.1 To provide information by way of a quarterly update to the Standards Committee regarding the previous years and the current position concerning Code of Conduct Complaints.
- 1.2 In addition that the Committee considers the information to discuss possible areas of member development and improvements.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	Councillors represent local residents, work to develop better services, and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of them and entrust them to represent our local area, taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. There is an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations. This report provides the Standards Committee with the information providing the current position to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government. Maintaining that confidence will support the delivery of all of the ambitions and the underpinning aims.
A healthy Place	
Safe and resilient communities	
Delivering best value	

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Standards Committee

- Notes the content of this report.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Not applicable as report is for information only.

4. Background and relevant information

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

Year (Jan-Dec)	Total	Member on Member	Other non Member (ie member of public / officer)	ONGOING	CONCLUDED				
					No. withdrawn/ discontinued due to not re-elected	No. rejected	No. resolved informally	No. to investigation	No. to standards Committee after investigation
2019	27	9	18	0	4	9	10	4	3
2020	31	4	27	0	16	12	1	2	1
2021	33	13	20	0	7	5	19	2	1
2022	12	3	9	0	4	4	2	2	2
2023	59	10	49	0	9	30	14	6	0
2024	21	7	14	5	0	8	8	0	0
2025	24	10	14	9	2	10	3	0	0

4.2 The shaded columns show the breakdown of the ongoing and complaints outcomes and will add up to the total number for the year.

4.3 The outstanding complaints as at 1st July 2025 are as follows:

Year	Total Number Received	Total Number Ongoing	Number of Cllrs
2024	21	5	1
2025 (to date)	24	9	6
TOTALS	45	14	7

4.4 Of the 14 outstanding complaints:

- 8, including 5 from 2024, are awaiting the outcome of an investigation or other external processes before they can continue.
- 6 are with the Independent Person/Monitoring Officer for consideration of the preliminary assessment and/or next stages. All 6 are no more than 4 weeks old.

4.5 There is a difference between the April 2025 update report and this report in regards to the number of rejected complaints for 2024. By way of explanation in error, the header column had been included in the total number, incorrectly having the number rejected as 9, when it is 8.

- 4.6 The column for the complaints resolved informally was also incorrectly populated as zero in the April 2025 report – this has now been rectified.
- 4.7 The introduction of the shaded columns as above should make it easier to identify where the information is not consistent, and provide an easier breakdown of the complaints received.
- 4.8 For clarification, the information shows each separate complaint. In some cases, we may get a number of complaints in regard to the same incident which can inflate the total number. We may also have the same complaint against a number of Councillors, which can again inflate the total number.
- 4.9 You will note that the outstanding complaint from 2023 has now been concluded by way of informal resolution, namely advice and guidance.
- 4.10 The common prevalent theme of the complaints continues to be the inappropriate use of social media. Training was therefore identified and carried out by the Local Government Association to Members on the 4 February 2025 and was attended by ten members as updated at the last meeting.
- 4.11 We are currently in the process of agreeing an additional training session with an external provider for September which will consider standards, and in particular social media use. All members will be encouraged to attend.
- 4.12 The theme of complaints will be continued to be monitored to consider what additional support is required.
- 4.13 As was updated at the last meeting the Monitoring Officer we are in the process of advertising for a full-time, permanent governance solicitor to assist and support in standards matters following a successful growth bid.
- 4.14 Relevant discussion points:
- **Review of monthly updates**
 - o Is this useful/should it continue
 - **Information provided**
 - o Is there anything not provided you would like to see on a regular basis
 - o Can we reduce the number of comparative years – reduce to three years including the current year
 - **Engagement with training**
 - o Are there any suggestions as to how we can engage more members in the training provided around standards

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

6.1 Not applicable as report is for information only.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	There is no financial impact as the report is for information and discussion only.
Legal	There is no legal impact as the report is for information and discussion only.
Risk	The report contributes to the Council demonstrating its approach to monitoring and maintaining standards of behaviour and ethical governance
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	There are no issues affecting human rights, the public sector equality duty or community cohesion.
Reducing Poverty	There is no impact on reducing poverty as the report is for information and discussion only.
Climate Change / Environmental	There is no impact on the Council's climate change or environmental aspirations as the report is for information and discussion only.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	There is no impact on children and young people cared for by the Authority and care leavers as the report is for information and discussion only.
Data Protection	There are no issues of data protection as the report is for information and discussion only.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
None		

Appendices

1	None
2	
3	

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
None		

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