

STANDARDS COMMITTEE



Report subject	Code of Conduct Complaints - Review
Meeting date	29 April 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides Members with an update on complaints regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct against councillors received or concluded since the last report to the Committee in February 2025.</p> <p>The Committee is responsible for maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of BCP Council and the Town and Parish Councils, monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct, and considering the outcome of commissioned independent investigations.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>the outcome of concluded complaints and the progress of those still outstanding be noted.</p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>This is an opportunity for Members of the Committee to be appraised of details of completed complaints and any outstanding complaints of alleged breaches against the Code of Conduct. This is in accordance with the functions of the Committee and its duty to discharge functions in relation to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct within the Council and amongst Town and Parish Councils within the area.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable
Corporate Director	Graham Farrant, Chief Executive
Report Authors	<p>Janie Berry, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Richard Jones, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</p>
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Information

Background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary and update of completed and ongoing complaints received regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct under the Localism Act 2011 against Councillors for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area, including parish and town councils.

Analysis

2. Details of allegations/complaints in relation to the Code of Conduct are outlined in the table set out in paragraph 7 to this report. Cases which were shown as closed in the previous report have been removed from this report.
3. The adopted arrangements for dealing with allegations of breach of the code of conduct for councillors now provides for an initial assessment by the Monitoring Officer, who may, if appropriate:
 - (a) reject the complaint on the grounds that it falls outside the scope of a valid Code of Conduct complaint;
 - (b) determine that there is no breach of the Code and no further action should be taken;
 - (c) where considered appropriate, enter into an early preliminary and informal dialogue with the complainant and the Councillor complained of, and agree a speedy informal resolution of the complaint; or
 - (d) refer the complaint to the Chair of Standards Committee for consideration.
4. Where complaints proceed to the Chair of the Standards Committee (in consultation with councillors of the Standards Committee, the Independent Persons and the Monitoring Officer (or their Deputy)), the Chair may decide whether:-
 - (a) there is no breach of the Code and no further action should be taken; or
 - (b) there is a potential breach of the Code and informal resolution is appropriate, to include for example mediation, training, apology, advice; or
 - (c) there is a potential breach of the Code and the Monitoring Officer should undertake or commission an investigation into the complaint with a view to a report then being considered by the Standards Committee.
5. The table contained in this report provides information about of the nature of the complaint, the assessment of the Monitoring Officer (where appropriate), the decision of the Chair (following consultation), any informal resolutions determined by Chair (where applicable), and the status of the complaint at the date of the report. Where a councillor is found to have potential breached the Code, the table includes reference to those categories which were upheld.
6. Specific detailed information regarding pending complaints has not been provided as this may be prejudicial to the conduct of the ongoing complaints process. Personal details have also not been included to protect both the identity of the subject councillors and the complainant, unless specific direction to the contrary has been expressed.

7. Table 1

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-172 22/03/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute 	<p>Referred to Monitoring officer for initial assessment.</p> <p>Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint has been referred to an independent investigator to review.</p> <p>Independent Investigator's final report received and included on the agenda for this meeting.</p>	Pending
BCP-177 04/04/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute 	<p>Referred to Monitoring officer for initial assessment.</p> <p>Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the Chair requested the subject councillor to furnish additional information.</p> <p>Complaint to be reassessed at consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.</p>	Pending
BCP-186 22/05/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to promote equalities 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee.</p> <p>Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was referred to an independent investigator to review.</p> <p>Independent Investigator's final report received and included on the agenda for this meeting.</p>	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-192 15/07/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to promote equalities 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee.</p> <p>Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint has been referred to an independent investigator to review.</p> <p>Independent Investigator final report received and included on the agenda for this meeting.</p>	Pending
BCP-193 25/07/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage • Misuse of Council resources 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee.</p> <p>Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint has been referred to an independent investigator to review.</p> <p>Independent Investigator final report received and included on the agenda for this meeting.</p>	Pending
BCP-195 15/08/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee.</p> <p>Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint has been referred to an independent investigator to review.</p> <p>Independent Investigator final report received and included on the agenda for this meeting.</p>	Pending
BCP-198 06/01/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Compromising, or attempting to compromise, the impartiality of anyone 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint.</p> <p>Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.</p>	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
	<p>who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage • Failure to disclose interests 		
BCP-199 29/01/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.</p>	Pending
BCP-203 30/01/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Failure to promote equalities • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.</p>	Pending
BCP-205 30/01/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.</p>	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-207 05/02/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Failure to promote equalities • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.	Pending
BCP-208 10/02/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer but insufficient evidence provided to demonstrate that subject councillor was acting in their capacity as a councillor. Complaint held in abeyance until 29/04/2025	On Hold
BCP-209 20/02/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute 	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.	Pending
BCP-210 03/03/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to comply with sanctions imposed following a finding of a breach of the code 	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-212 11/03/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer before referring to the subject councillor for comments.	Pending
BCP-213 11/03/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to promote equalities • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer before referring to the subject councillor for comments.	Pending
BCP-214 21/03/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer before referring to the subject councillor for comments.	Pending
BCP-215 26/03/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer before referring to the subject councillor for comments.	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-216 26/03/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Intimidating or attempting to intimidate a person involved in investigation 	Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer before referring to the subject councillor for comments.	Pending
BCP-217 02/04/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Failure to promote equalities • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority • Improper use of information • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage • Misuse of council resources • Failure to undertake code of conduct training • Failure to cooperate with code of conduct investigation • Intimidating or attempting to intimidate a person involved in 	Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer before referring to the subject councillor for comments.	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
	investigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to comply with sanctions imposed following a finding of a breach of the code 		
Town and Parish Council Complaints			
TPC-013 30/04/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying or harassing a person • Failure to promote equalities • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint has been referred to an independent investigator to review. Independent Investigator final report received and included on the agenda for this meeting.	Pending
TPC-014 03/05/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Failure to promote equalities • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage • Failure to undertake code of conduct training 	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint has been referred to an independent investigator to review. Independent Investigator final report received and included on the agenda for this meeting.	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
TPC-021 02/01/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	<p>Complaint was previously submitted but supporting evidence was not forthcoming within the time permitted. The complaint was closed as incomplete. Supporting evidence has subsequently been provided and the complaint re-opened.</p> <p>Subject councillor response received.</p> <p>Complaint to be considered at Chair's consultation meeting on 22/04/2025.</p>	Pending
TPC-022 08/07/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage 	<p>Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee.</p> <p>Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint has been referred to an independent investigator to review.</p> <p>Awaiting Independent Investigator's report.</p>	Pending
TPC-023 31/03/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying or harassing a person • Improper use of information • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute 	<p>Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer before referring to the subject councillor for comments.</p>	Pending

Summary of financial implications

8. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Summary of legal implications

9. The Council has a legal duty to respond to complaints made against councillors of allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct. The Council has adopted procedures for handling complaints.

Summary of human resources implications

10. There are no direct manpower implications arising from this report, however, the Committee will be aware that the handling and processing of complaints is resource intensive. A high volume of complaints could require the need for additional resources. It is therefore critical that the committee continuously seeks to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by all councillors to help limit the number of complaints.

Summary of sustainability impact

11. There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Summary of public health implications

12. There are no public health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

13. This report is reporting on the outcome of complaints made against councillors for alleged breaches of the Councillor's Code of Conduct and consequently there are no direct equalities implications arising from this report. The Code of Conduct includes a duty upon all councillors to promote equalities and to not discriminate unlawfully against any person. Equality implications are considered as an integral part of the complaints process.

Summary of risk assessment

14. There are no direct risks associated with this report.

Background papers

Records of complaints received by the Council under the references referred to in Table 1. These records contain exempt information (Categories 1 (Information relating to any individual) and 2 (Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)).

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.