

# STANDARDS COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Review of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure</b>
Meeting date	8 July 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Standards Committee is asked to commence a review of the Procedure for the handling of complaints received under the Code of Conduct.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b>  <b>(a) The Committee undertakes a review of the Complaints Handling Procedure</b>  <b>(b) The Committee will report on the outcome of its review at a future meeting</b>
Reason for recommendations	The Committee, as part of its work programme, has expressed concerns about the robustness of the complaints handling procedure which accompanies the Code of Conduct including whether or not the procedure offers sufficient transparency.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable
Corporate Director	Graham Farrant, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Janie Berry, Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

## Background

1. BCP Council is under a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of its Councillors and Co-Opted Members. In discharging this duty the Council has adopted the LGA Model Code of Conduct. To aid the promotion of the Code of Conduct, the Council must publish arrangements by which allegations of the Code of Conduct can be investigated. At BCP Council both the Code of Conduct and the association complaints handling procedure are included in Part 6 of the Constitution.
2. The complaints handling procedure also applies to complaints received about Town and Parish Councillors across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
3. The Complaints Handling Procedure has been in operation for a number of years without a comprehensive review as to its fitness for purpose. The current procedure does not make provision for councillors found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct to be named which some find is a concern as this does not promote transparency. However it does promote the role of our Independent Persons and it does involve the members of the Committee on a consultation basis to support the Chair of Standards Committee.
4. Whilst the Government has widely consulted on the Standards Framework, there are no requirements for all councils to promote a common Code of Conduct and a common complaints handling procedure. This means that Councils are able to promote local complaints handling procedures.
5. By way of examples, Cornwall Council operate a procedure whereby all Councillors are named [Code of Conduct complaints - Cornwall Council](#) via the publication of detailed decision notices. Dorset Council operates a different procedure which does not publish subject councillor details of the complaint is not upheld but if there is a breach the outcome is reported to full council and a decision notice is published. [Councillor Code of Conduct complaint process February 2025.pdf](#)
6. BCP Council's complaints handling procedure appears at Appendix 1 to this report and is also published within Part 6 of the Council's Constitution. Upon review there could be scope to make provision for the publication of decision notices at the various stages of a complaint investigation and/or to set out prescribed processes for each stage of the complaints process.
7. The views of the Standards Committee are sought to inform a review of the complaints handling procedure. This review is to include establishing a timeframe for the reporting back of outcomes and to include any consultation prior to a recommendation to Council.

## Options Appraisal

8. BCP Council is required to promote a Code of Conduct and put in place procedures for the management of complaints received. The Committee may choose to retain the existing complaints handling procedure or seek a review of the existing arrangements. It is not an option for the Council to remove the complaints procedure entirely from the Constitution.

## Summary of financial implications

9. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### **Summary of legal implications**

10. The Council is required to comply with the Localism Act 2011 and must promote a Code of Conduct and procedures for the investigation of Code of Conduct complaints. The Complaints handling procedure is applicable to complaints received about Town and Parish Councillors as the respective Town and Parish Councils are not permitted to investigate themselves.
11. The Government has recently consulted (consultation closed in February 2025) on the Standards Framework and any future outcomes from this Consultation may impact the complaints handling procedures.
12. Any amendments made to the Code of Conduct and or the complaints handling procedure will require the approval of Council to enable the Constitution to be amended.

### **Summary of human resources implications**

13. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

14. There are no sustainability impacts arising from this report.

### **Summary of public health implications**

15. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

### **Summary of equality implications**

16. It is possible that as part of the review process, an equalities impact assessment may be required.

### **Summary of risk assessment**

17. There are no known risks at this stage.

### **Background papers**

BCP Council Constitution

12 February 2025 Standards Committee Meeting – Agenda, Reports and Minutes

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – BCP Council Complaints Handling Procedure