

STANDARDS COMMITTEE



Report subject	Code of Conduct Complaints - Review
Meeting date	7 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	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 July 2025. 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.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: the outcome of concluded complaints and the progress of those still outstanding be noted.
Reason for recommendations	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.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Robin Watson, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer Richard Jones, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
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 the 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. The committee's attention is drawn to complaints referenced BCP-199, BCP-203, BCP-205, BCP-207 and BCP-209. These complaints have been closed on the basis that officers have exhausted all reasonable attempts to secure compliance by the subject councillor. The complainants were provided an update of their respective complaint and advised that if they wish to pursue the matter further they would be required to submit a new complaint on the grounds that the councillor has breached Code 8.4 (Failure to comply with a sanction imposed). At the time of writing this report, three of the five complainants have registered new complaints.
8. Table 1

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-199 29/01/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect (Upheld) • Bullying a person (Upheld) • Harassing a person (Dismissed) • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute (Upheld)	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was partially upheld. Subject councillor advised of outcome and requested appropriate apologies – 04/06/2025 Compliance was not forthcoming and despite attempts to secure compliance this was unsuccessful. The complainant advised accordingly on 07/08/2025 and this complaint closed.	Closed 07/08/2025
BCP-203 30/01/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect (Upheld) • Bullying a person (Upheld) • Harassing a person (Dismissed) • Failure to promote equalities (Dismissed) • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority (Dismissed)	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was partially upheld. Subject councillor advised of outcome and requested appropriate apologies – 04/06/2025 Compliance was not	Closed 07/08/2025

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
		forthcoming and despite attempts to secure compliance this was unsuccessful. The complainant advised accordingly on 07/08/2025 and this complaint closed.	
BCP-205 30/01/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect (Upheld) • Bullying a person (Upheld) • Harassing a person (Dismissed) • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute (Upheld)	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was partially upheld. Subject councillor advised of outcome and requested appropriate apologies – 04/06/2025 Compliance was not forthcoming and despite attempts to secure compliance this was unsuccessful. The complainant advised accordingly on 07/08/2025 and this complaint closed. Associated complaint for non-compliance registered under BCP-226.	Closed 07/08/2025
BCP-207 05/02/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect (Upheld) • Bullying a person (Upheld) • Harassing a person (Dismissed) • Failure to promote equalities (Dismissed) • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute (Upheld) • Using or attempting	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was partially upheld. Subject councillor advised of outcome and requested appropriate apologies – 04/06/2025	Closed 07/08/2025

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
	to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage (Dismissed)	Compliance was not forthcoming and despite attempts to secure compliance this was unsuccessful. The complainant advised accordingly on 07/08/2025 and this complaint closed. Associated complaint for non-compliance registered under BCP-228.	
BCP-209 20/02/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect (Upheld) • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute (Upheld)	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and referred to Chair of Committee. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was partially upheld. Subject councillor advised of outcome and requested appropriate apologies – 04/06/2025 Compliance was not forthcoming and despite attempts to secure compliance this was unsuccessful. The complainant advised accordingly on 07/08/2025 and this complaint closed. Associated complaint for non-compliance registered under BCP-227.	Closed 07/08/2025
BCP-214 21/03/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person • Harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as	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 19/08/2025.	Closed 19/08/2025

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
	a Councillor improperly to confer advantage	Incomplete	
BCP-218 11/06/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was dismissed. There was no evidence to demonstrate the Code had been breached.	Closed 01/09/2025
BCP-219 23/06/2025	• Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was dismissed. The subject councillor was not considered to be acting as a councillor.	Closed 01/09/2025
BCP-220 26/06/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Harassing a person • 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 • Intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person involved in	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Awaiting response from subject councillor – deadline 14/07/2025	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
	investigation or proceedings		
BCP-221 20/08/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority • Disclosure of or misuse of information provided in confidence • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Misuse of local authority resources and facilities	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Awaiting response from subject councillor – deadline 29/09/2025	Pending
BCP-222 13/08/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person • Harassing a person • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person involved in investigation or proceedings	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Response received and awaiting consultation meeting to be scheduled	Pending
BCP-223 17/07/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Response received and awaiting consultation meeting to be scheduled	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-224 28/08/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Failure to promote equalities and to not discriminate • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Awaiting response from subject councillor – deadline 29/09/2025	Pending
BCP-225 14/08/2025	• Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Response received and awaiting consultation meeting to be scheduled	Pending
BCP-226 07/08/2025	• Failure to comply with sanctions imposed	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Awaiting response from subject councillor – initial deadline of 29/08/2025 not met. Final deadline 29/09/2025 after which complaint will be referred to consultation meeting	Pending
BCP-227 07/08/2025	• Failure to comply with sanctions imposed	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Awaiting response from subject councillor – initial deadline of 29/08/2025 not met. Final deadline 29/09/2025 after which complaint will be referred to consultation meeting	Pending

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
BCP-228 08/08/2025	• Failure to comply with sanctions imposed	Initially assessed by the Monitoring Officer and subject councillor requested to respond to complaint. Awaiting response from subject councillor – initial deadline of 29/08/2025 not met. Final deadline 29/09/2025 after which complaint will be referred to consultation meeting	Pending
BCP-229 15/09/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person • Failure to promote equalities and to not discriminate • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage	Initial assessment of complaint by the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer in progress	Pending
Town and Parish Council Complaints			
TPC-021 02/01/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect (Upheld) • Bullying a person (Upheld) • Harassing a person (Dismissed) • Disclosure of confidential information (Upheld) • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute (Upheld) • Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage (Upheld)	Complaint was previously submitted but supporting evidence was not forthcoming within the time permitted. The complaint was closed as incomplete. Supporting evidence was subsequently provided and the complaint re-opened. Following consultation with committee members and independent persons, the complaint was partially upheld. Subject councillor advised of outcome and requested appropriate apologies –	Closed 15/09/2025

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
		04/06/2025 Apology provided to complainant. Complaint closed.	
TPC-022 08/07/2024	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person • 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	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. The independent investigation has been completed and is the subject of a separate report on the agenda for this meeting.	Pending
TPC-023 31/03/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person • Harassing a person • Improper use of information • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute	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 19/08/2025 Incomplete	Closed 19/08/2025
TPC-024 02/04/2025	• Failure to treat others with respect • Bullying a person • Harassing a person • Failure to promote equalities • Compromise impartiality of anyone who works for the local authority • Improper use of information • Bringing the office of Councillor or the Council into	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 19/08/2025 Incomplete	Closed 19/08/2025

Reference (Received)	Nature of allegation	Outcome / Decision	Status
	disrepute - Using or attempting to use the position as a Councillor improperly to confer advantage - Misuse of Council resources - Complying with the codes of conduct		

Summary of financial implications

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

Summary of legal implications

10. 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

11. 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

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

Summary of public health implications

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

Summary of equality implications

14. 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

15. 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.