

Annual Report of the Joint Standards Committee for 2024/2025

Foreword from the Chair of the Joint Standards Committee

This has been a year of consolidation for the Joint Standards Committee as we have continued to manage the complaints process in an open, fair, and transparent way as the procedures allow. We welcomed Parish Councillor Diane Geoghegan-Breen following her appointment as a Parish Council representative. Rose Mazza and Joe Leigh, our Independent Persons, have again offered their expert advice and observations. We continue to review our policies and procedures, and where necessary, recommend changes to Full Council.

Managing the complaints received about our City, Parish and Town Councillors has remained a large part of our work during this last year. We have developed our relationships with Parish Councils and have seen the benefit of this in the lower number of complaints lodged against Parish Councillors.

I would like to thank the Monitoring Officer, his deputies, Frances Harrison and Lindsay Tomlinson, and their teams, for their vital support and guidance. I also want to acknowledge the help and support given by Democratic Services.

Cllr M Rowley BEM
Chair of Joint Standards Committee, May 2025

Membership of the Committee

The Committee would like to thank all of its Members for supporting and attending the meetings during this year. The Committee appointed Councillor Martin Rowley as the Chair and Councillor Mark Waudby as the Vice Chair.

City of York Council:

- Councillor Martin Rowley BEM
- Councillor Tony Fisher
- Councillor Jenny Kent
- Councillor Michael Pavlovic

- Councillor Carol Runciman

Parish Councils

- Councillor Mark Waudby
- Councillor Diane Geogheghan-Breen
- Councillor Christopher Chambers

Independent Persons

- Mr Joe Leigh
- Ms Rose Mazza

Complaints

The Council received the following Code of Conduct complaints in the Municipal year May 2024 to May 2025:

Total number of complaints made: 9

Of those, number closed: 8

Number of current year complaints ongoing: 1

The following pie charts illustrate the nature of the complaints, who they came from, whether they were Parish or CYC and how they were dealt with (if closed) in the municipal year 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25 to allow for comparison.

Figure 1

Nature of complaints 24/25

8/9 disrespect/disrepute – 89%

1/9 not declaring an interest – 11%

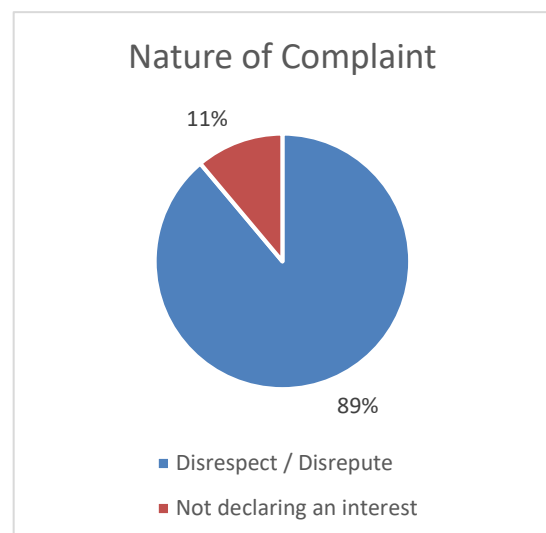


Figure 2
Nature of complaints 23/24

19/21 disrespect/disrepute – 90%
 2/21 not declaring an interest – 10%

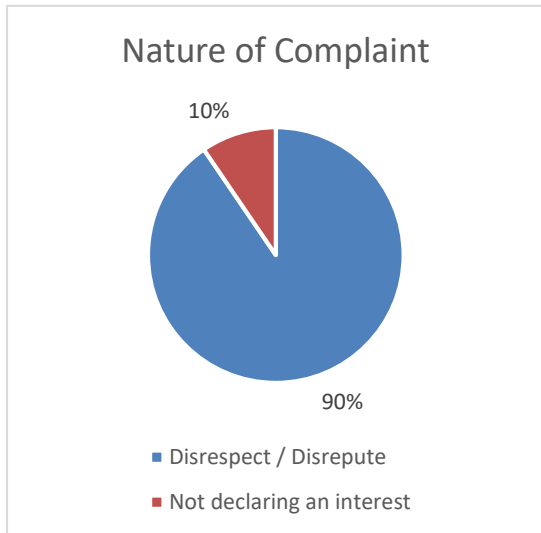


Figure 3
Nature of complaints 22/23

11/14 disrespect/disrepute – 79%
 3/14 not declaring an interest – 21%

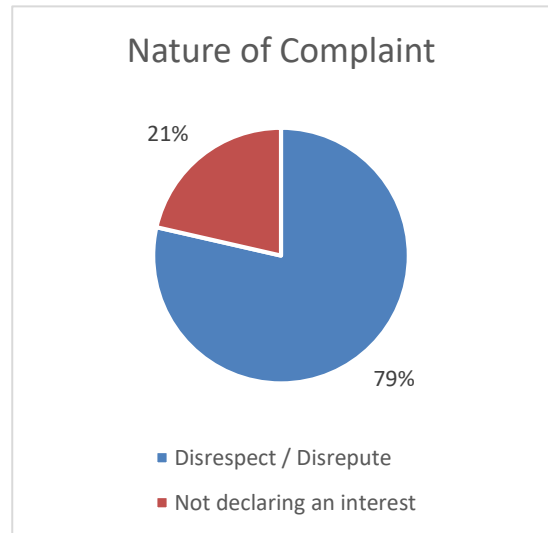


Figure 4
Origin of complaint 2024/25

CYC Councillor 2/9 – 22%
 Parish Councillor 1/9 – 11%
 Member of the Public 5/9 – 56%
 Officer/Other 1/9 – 11%

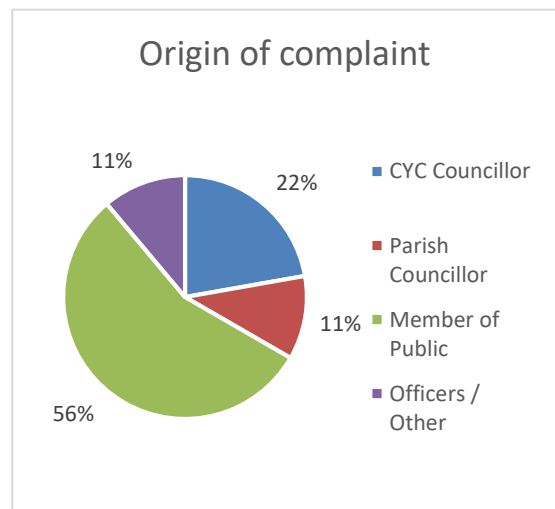


Figure 5
Origin of complaint 2023/24

CYC Councillor 1/21 – 5%
 Parish Councillor 7/21 – 33%
 Member of the Public 11/21 – 52%
 Officer/Other 2/21 – 10%

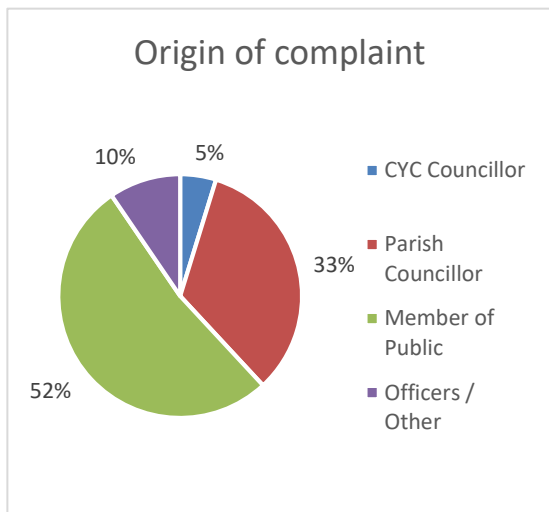


Figure 6
Origin of complaint 2022/23

CYC Councillor 3/14 – 21%
 Parish Councillor 5/14 – 36%
 Member of the Public 4/14 – 29%
 Officer/Other 2/14 – 14%

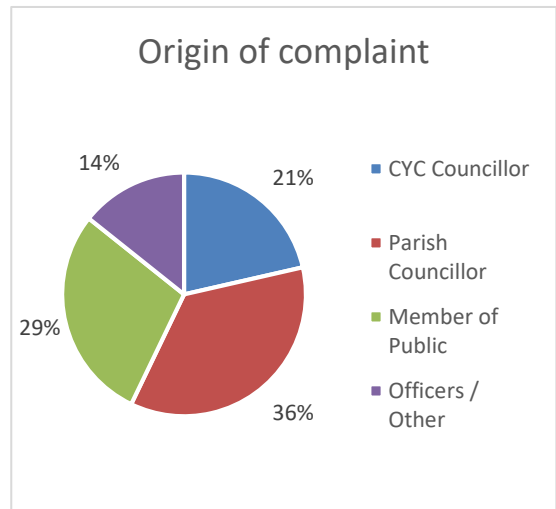


Figure 7
Subject Member of complaint 2024/25

CYC Councillor 5/9 – 56%
 Parish Councillor 3/9 – 33%
 Unknown 1/9 – 11%

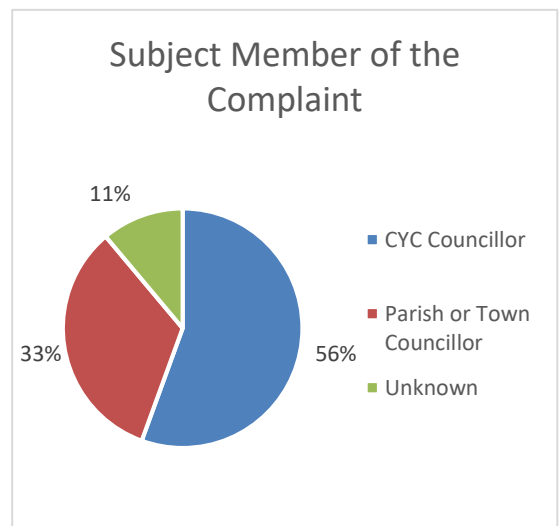


Figure 8
Subject Member of complaint
2023/24

CYC Councillor 8/21 – 38%
 Parish Councillor 13/21 – 62%

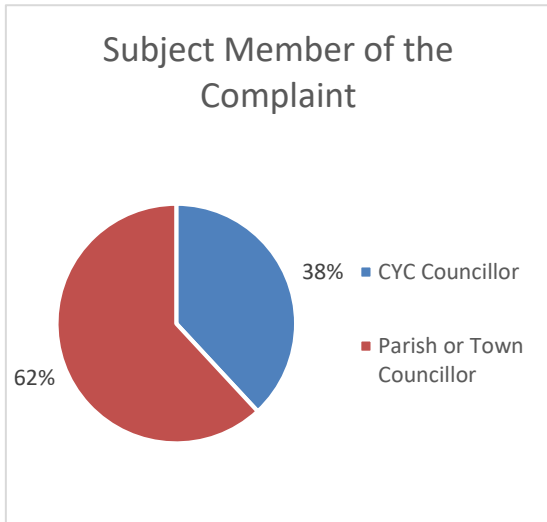


Figure 9
Subject Member of
complaint 2022/23

CYC Councillor 8/14 – 57%
 Parish Councillor 6/14 – 43%

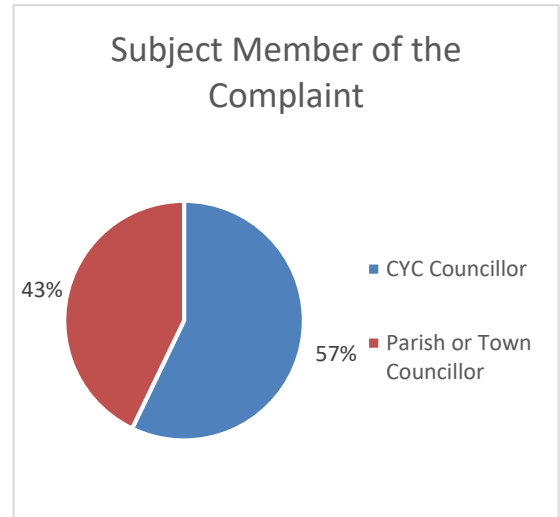


Figure 10 - Outcome of complaints received 2024/25

Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer 0/9 – 0%
 NFA at filter stage 4/9 – 45%
 Referred to Assessment Sub-Committee – outstanding 0/9 – 0%
 Closed following Assessment Sub-Committee - no breach found 1/9
 Informal resolution 3/9 – 33%
 Progressed to investigation - investigation ongoing 0/9 – 0%
 Closed following investigation - breach found 1/9 - 11%

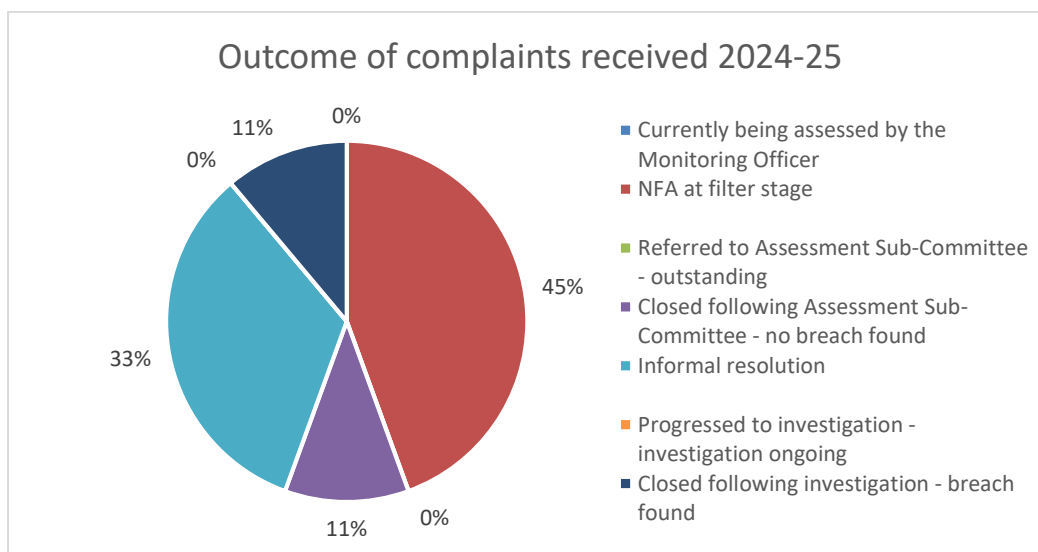


Figure 11 - Outcome of complaints received 2023/24

Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer 5/21 – 24%
 NFA at filter stage 6/21 – 28%
 Referred to Assessment Sub-Committee – outstanding 0/21 – 0%
 Closed following Assessment Sub-Committee - no breach found 5/21 – 24%
 Informal resolution 1/21 – 5%
 Progressed to investigation - investigation ongoing 3/21 – 14%
 Closed following investigation - breach found 1/21 – 5%

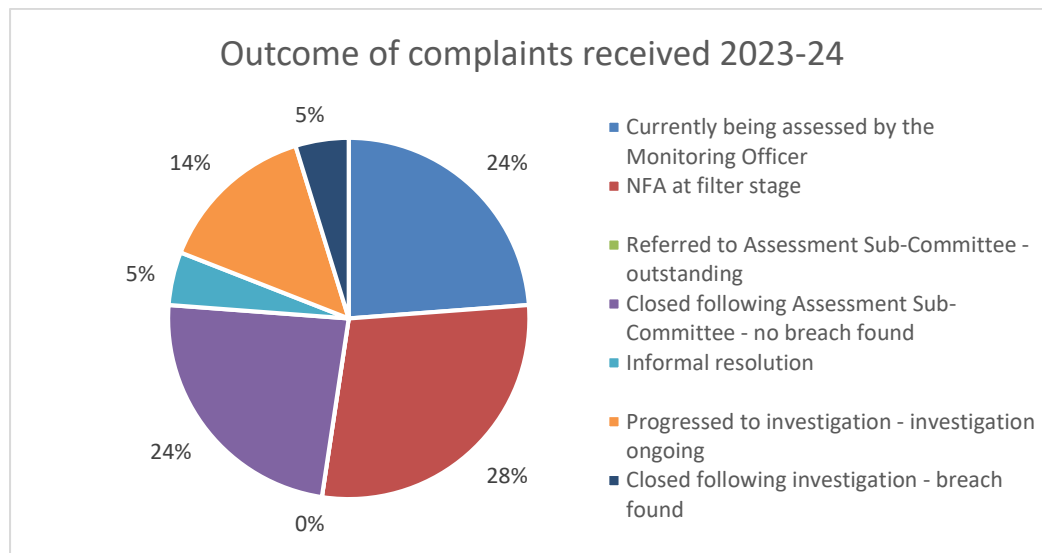
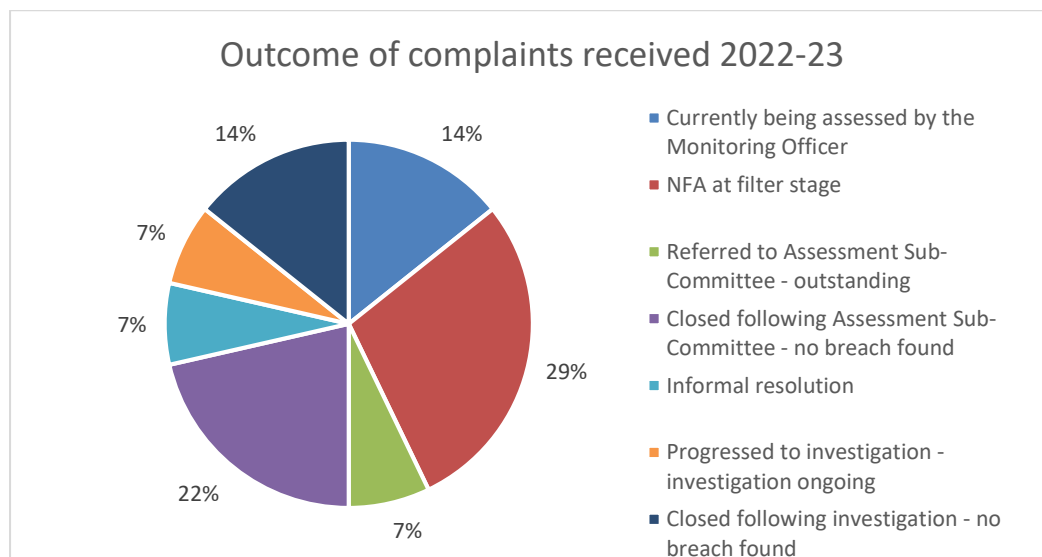


Figure 12 - Outcome of complaints received 2022/23

Currently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer 2/14 – 14%
 NFA at filter stage 4/14 – 29%
 Referred to Assessment Sub-Committee – outstanding 1/14 – 7%
 Closed following Assessment Sub-Committee - no breach found 3/14 – 22%
 Informal resolution 1/14 – 7%
 Progressed to investigation - investigation ongoing 1/14 – 7%
 Closed following investigation - no breach found 2/14 – 14%



All of the complaints received have been reported to meetings of the Joint Standards Committee throughout the year.

Summary and Trends

- The overall number of complaints for 24/25 is down from previous years
- The most common alleged breach is disrespect/disrepute and this has remained consistent over the past 3 years
- The distribution of both complaint origin and subject member has remained *broadly similar* over the 3 years shown
- The outcomes of cases have also remained *broadly similar* with a slight upward trend in cases concluded by informal resolution in 24/25.

Other work

Consultation on Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England

On 18th December 2024, the Government published a consultation paper on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England.

The Localism Act 2011 provides the legislative framework for the current standards regime in English authorities. It provides local authorities (“LAs”) with a broad discretion as to the 'arrangements' they implement and the form of the Member Code of Conduct they adopt. It also removed the requirement for LAs to have a Standards Committee.

Members and co-opted members of the Council Joint Standards Committee, as well as the wider local government community, have long voiced frustration with the weakness of sanctions available for dealing with poor conduct. This was recognised in the consultation paper which sought views on how best to equip LAs to deal effectively with conduct issues in the context of the wider devolution agenda.

Members of the Joint Standards Committee considered the consultation paper in full and agreed a response to be submitted on behalf of the Council in consultation with the Leader and the Chief Operating Officer.

The consultation closed on 26th February 2025.

The consultation response submitted on behalf of CYC was in general terms supportive of:

- a) a national mandatory code of conduct;

- b) requirements for principal authorities to maintain standards committees and for members to co-operate with standards investigations;
- c) powers to local standards committees to impose suspensions up to 6 months and to withhold allowances for serious code of conduct breaches;
- d) the introduction of disqualification as a sanction for cumulative breaches;
- e) a right for members to appeal decisions to suspend (but no right for complainants to appeal failure to uphold complaints or impose sanctions)
- f) local or regional appeals panels.

The CYC response was not generally supportive of banning members from Council premises during investigation, although the Head of Paid Service noted caution in certain types of cases where measures to protect the health and safety of staff would be legally required.