

Joint Standards Committee

3rd August 2016

Report of the Monitoring Officer

Review of Complaints for the last Municipal Year

Summary

1. This annual report provides an overview of the standards complaints received during the previous municipal year.

Complaints received

2. The table below describes the complaints handled during the last municipal year.

City or Parish Councillor	Complainant	Date Received	Outcome	Date Concluded
City (complaint against two councillors)	Councillor	13/11/2014	Sub Committee referred for investigation. Investigation concluded no breach.	18/6/2015
City	Member of the public	10/6/2015	MO decision. Any breach too minor to justify action	26/6/2015
City	Member of the public	24/6/2015	MO decision no breach.	13/7/2015
City	Member of the public	13/7/2015	MO decision. Outside of jurisdiction – private matter	15/7/2015
City	Councillors	18/8/2015	Attempted informal resolution. Failed. Referred to	12/11/2015

			Standards Sub. Committee who asked Member to reflect on his actions.	
Parish (complaint against 3 Councillors)	Member of the public	28/9/2015	Sub Committee referred for investigation. Breach identified by one Councillor. Apology to be offered to achieve informal resolution	
Parish (complaint against 13 councillors)	Member of the public	14/1/2016	MO referred for investigation. Breach identified. To be referred for hearing.	
City	Member of the public	30/8/2015 (additional information submitted until 27/9/2015) 31/8/2015	MO decision. First complaint no action as any breach had been dealt with by apology already offered. Second complaint no breach	16/10/2015 28/10/2015
City	Member of public	11/4/2016	Sub committee referred for investigation	

3. Nine complaints were received last year including two from the same person against the same Councillor. A tenth complaint was ongoing from the previous year. The previous year had seen a record number of complaints at eleven. In comparison the previous two years had seen five and seven complaints.
4. Two complaints related to Parish Councillors in that capacity and the rest concerned City Councillors. Both Parish complaints were against multiple councillors of the same Parish. As in previous

years Parish Councillors received fewer complaints in relation to their overall numbers than did City Councillors.

5. During the course of the last year two Councillors were the subject of more than one complaint. One of these was the Councillor referred to above who was the subject of separate complaints by one person, neither of which was felt to merit investigation. The other Councillor was the subject of one complaint in respect of which no breach was identified and one which is currently the subject of investigation. That Councillor was also the subject of complaints in the previous year in respect of which no breach was identified.
6. The most common reason for a complaint was that a Member had allegedly failed to treat someone with respect or, in the case of City Councillors, had brought the Council into disrepute. Other complaints included allegations which related to failure to register an interest, failure to declare an interest and conferring a disadvantage on a person.
7. Three investigations were initiated. This is the same number as in each of the last two years. One of these cases is ongoing. One identified a breach of the code of conduct which has been identified as suitable for informal resolution and one case has been referred for a hearing. A fourth investigation from the previous year was completed during the last Municipal year and concluded that there had not been a breach of the code.
8. No hearings took place during the year. The forthcoming hearing will therefore only be the second since the current standards regime came into effect in 2012 and the first to be conducted under new procedures which the Committee adopted in 2014.
9. Cases where no obvious breach of the code has been identified have continued to be processed promptly. One case was resolved in two days but two weeks is the norm where delegated powers are used following consultation with the independent persons. Cases take a little longer when they are referred to a Sub Committee or where efforts to resolve a complaint informally have been made but failed. The one full concluded investigation took seven months to resolve.

Recommendations

10. Members are recommended to:

1) Note the report

Reason: To ensure that the Committee continues to make an effective contribution to ethical standards within the City Council.

Contact Details

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Report
Approved

Date 19/07/16

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None