

Written representation in relation to agenda item 10, Monitoring Report in respect of Complaints Received

Standards Complaints Reporting: Supporting Effective Committee Oversight

Chair,

The purpose of my statement is to consider whether the Committee's published reports provide sufficient information for Members to effectively discharge, and, most importantly, be seen to discharge, their oversight responsibilities in relation to the Standards complaints process.



Annex A (i)

PUBLIC - Open Complaints Log

Case ref	City or Parish	Complainant	Date Received	Nature of Complaint	Status / updates	Officer
2026/02	Parish	1 x Resident	14/01/26	Concerns regarding various breaches of the Parish Code of Conduct.	This complaint is currently being assessed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer. IP views sought.	CC
2026/09	CYC	1 x Resident	09/05/2026	This complaint is regarding a leaflet that the complainant believes contains wording that is racist and discriminatory.	This complaint is currently being assessed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer. IP views sought.	CC
2026/10	CYC	1 x Resident	11/05/2026	This complaint is regarding the conduct of the member at the Haxby Annual Town Council and his bullying and threatening behaviour throughout the meeting.	This complaint is currently being assessed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer. IP views sought.	CC
2026/11	2 x CYC	MP	16/06/2026	The complaint is regarding a letter which has been shared by 2 Councillors regarding changes proposed by the Boundary Commission. The complainant alleges the communication is misleading.	This complaint is currently being assessed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer. The 2 Councillors involved have been approached for a response they have 10 working days to reply (25.6) once the responses received, they will be assessed by the IP. A response has now been received from both of the Cllrs and IPs advice is being sought.	JG

Members will recall that the Standards complaints process was substantially revised following the (non/mis) handling of my complaint against the then Leader of the Council, which ultimately became the subject of a rare device CYC Public Interest Report (it is all in public record).

Those revised arrangements were intended to improve **timeliness, transparency, consistency and comparability**, strengthen **Member oversight of the Monitoring Officer's exercise of the Committee's**

delegated Standards functions, and promote fairness for both complainants and subject members.

More recently, responsibility for key stages of the process has become, more than ever, concentrated in the hands of the Monitoring Officer. That makes a transparent and consistently reported procedural record, through both the Open Complaints Log and the Committee's published reports and minutes, all the more important.

In its current form, however, the Open Complaints Log and the accompanying Committee report do not provide a consistent, comparable or a sufficiently complete record of procedural progress. As a result, it is not possible to understand from the published record whether complaints are being treated fairly - have reached the same procedural stages, or whether they have but those stages have not been recorded in the report.

The current report also appears to apply two different reporting styles. Three complaints are reported in a brief, formulaic manner, (CC) whereas a fourth, reported separately by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, records the procedural milestones reached during the assessment. No explanation is provided for those different approaches to reporting, which is particularly concerning. The DMO submission is as I would expect.

By way of clarification:

Complaint 2026/02

Complaint 2026/02 was received on **14 January 2026** and has now appeared before the Committee in four successive reports.

One of the principal objectives of the then revised Standards arrangements was to improve the timeliness of the complaints process. More than six months after receipt, the published tabulation contains no indication that the complaint has progressed beyond the initial assessment stage. The published description of the complaint has also been materially abbreviated since it first appeared before the Committee in January, which is also concerning. No explanation is given for that change. The covering report likewise gives no comfort or assurances.

Unlike complaint 2026/11 (DMO / MP complaint) the published reports contain no indication that the subject member has been notified, invited

to respond, afforded the prescribed ten working day response period, that any response has been received, or that any subsequent procedural milestones have been reached. If the complaint has remained at the same procedural stage throughout that period, this raises an obvious question regarding timeliness. If it has progressed, those stages have simply not been recorded in the published reports, as clearly they should have been for the most rudimentary transparency.

An extended assessment period is inherently stressful for both the complainant and the subject member. The published record should enable the Committee to understand whether the process is operating in a timely manner. For comparison the then MO did not even report my complaint to Cttee for about 9 months despite me attending almost every Cttee complaining about it. You see why I keep close attention and why the process was ultimately changed.

Complaint 2026/09

Complaint 2026/09 was received on **9 May 2026**. The published report states only that the complaint is being assessed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and that Independent Person views have been sought. No procedural milestones are recorded beyond that point.

Complaint 2026/10

Complaint 2026/10, received on **11 May 2026**, is reported in substantially identical terms. Again, no procedural milestones are recorded beyond the initial assessment. The word allegedly has been missed out implicitly stating s/he was a bully..

The current entries for complaints **2026/02, 2026/09 and 2026/10** do not even record whether the gateway stage has been completed. As gateway assessment is a fundamental procedural milestone, its omission means the Committee cannot determine from the published report how far those complaints have progressed through the adopted process.

Complaint 2026/11

By contrast, complaint 2026/11, received on **16 June 2026**, is reported in a markedly different and more transparent manner. The report records

notification of the subject members, the prescribed ten working day response period, receipt of responses and the current stage of the assessment. That procedural chronology enables the Committee to understand how the complaint has progressed through the adopted process other than the date of gateway approval.

It is noteworthy however that the complainant is noted as MP, which rather exposes the complainant, a process that is anonymised in all other cases.

The Committee's published reports and minutes are the **authoritative public summaries** of its oversight of the Standards complaints process. They are the means by which the Committee demonstrates how it has exercised its oversight responsibilities. Those published reports must therefore provide a complete, consistent, comparable and sufficiently informative record of procedural progress. Private briefing papers cannot fulfil that public accountability function.

Committee please therefore consider the following recommendations:

1. Reporting framework

Adopt a standard reporting framework for both the Open Complaints Log and the accompanying Committee reports, ensuring that all complaints are reported against the same procedural milestones.

2. Procedural milestones

Ensure that published reports provide a complete, consistent, comparable and sufficiently informative record of procedural progress, including fundamental dated milestones such as completion of the gateway assessment.

3. Consistency of reporting

Apply the same reporting standard consistently across the Standards team so that the content and quality of published reports are not dependent upon the individual reporting officer. Also the introductory report, rather than cut and paste, would benefit from an assurance, or explanation on the progress of the ongoing, whether on time or otherwise.

4. Member oversight

Review whether the Committee's published reports provide Members with sufficient information to effectively discharge, and be seen to

discharge, their oversight responsibilities in relation to the Monitoring Officer's exercise of the Committee's delegated Standards functions.

5. Committee minutes

Review whether the Committee's current approach to minute-taking provides an adequate public record of its consideration of the Open Complaints Log and the exercise of its oversight responsibilities, including the required summary minuting of the private discussions.

The Committee's reports explain the matters placed before Members; the minutes should record the principal issues considered, any significant questions raised, and any conclusions, recommendations or actions arising, so that the Committee can be seen to have effectively exercised its oversight role.

Yours sincerely,

Gwen Swinburn