



Report of: Director of Law and Governance

Meeting of	Date	Ward(s)
Audit Committee	5 October 2021	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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Subject: ANNUAL REPORT ON STANDARDS AND MEMBER CONDUCT

1. Synopsis

In accordance with the Audit Committee Terms of Reference, the Monitoring Officer is required to submit to the committee an annual report concerning standards of member conduct, including a summary of complaints received under the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure and their outcome. The complaints received in the municipal year 2020-21 are detailed below. This report also includes information on member training and development and declarations of interest.

2. Recommendation

2.1 To note the contents of the report.

3. Details

3.1 Member Training and Development

3.2 Member training during 2020/21 was impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic, in part due to the other demands on Members' time. However a number of virtual training events were organised including Unconscious Bias training sessions, which all Members were able to attend.

3.3 There is a small budget available for external training and conference attendance, which is divided between the Executive and backbench members to ensure it is fairly allocated. A number of Executive Member attended remote training courses, including LGA Cabinet Member training, Leadership Essentials training and Media training. A number of Backbench members attended remote training courses on Advanced Chairing, Chairing virtual meetings, Questioning skills for Scrutiny Committee members and the LGA Effective Scrutiny course. Finally, a co-opted member attended CIPFA's Redmond Review Webinar.

3.4 Information about free of charge and subsidised development opportunities, provided by London Councils and the Local Government Association, was regularly circulated to Members and the political group office.

3.5 Members were also provided with specific advice on governance issues from time to time, including advice regarding declarations of interest and information governance.

3.6 Financial Declarations

3.7 Members reviewed, confirmed and where necessary, updated, their register of interests, including their financial declarations, in March 2021. The Members Register of Interests is available on the Council's website.

3.8 The Members interests, declarations of interest made at meetings, declarations regarding gifts and hospitality and the councillors' attendance record at committee meetings are all available on the Council's website.

3.9 Complaints

3.10 All complaints under the Members Code of Conduct are referred to the Monitoring Officer (the Director of Law and Governance). Following consideration of the complaint, the Monitoring Officer decides whether it is appropriate to seek an informal resolution.

Where there is no informal resolution, the Monitoring Officer may:

- decide not to investigate further;
- decide that the matter requires investigation.
- decide to refer the decision as to whether or not there is to be an investigation to the Standards Committee.

3.11 No formal complaints have been received against Members during 2020-21 relating to breaches of the Members Code of Conduct, although some issues have been raised which have not reached that stage, as follows:

	Members involved	Complainant	Topic	Formal complaint	Outcome
1	1	Member of the public	A Tweet posted by a councillor	N	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
2	1	Member of the public	Two Tweets posted by a councillor	N	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.

3	1	Member of the public	That a councillor pre-determined a Planning application	N	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
4	1	Member of the public	That a councillor inappropriately granted permission for a memorial.	N	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
5	1	Member of the public	Past conduct of a councillor, prior to their election	N	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
6	1	Member of the public	The decision to introduce Low Traffic Neighbourhoods was discriminatory.	N	The complainant was advised the decision was made by the Executive collectively and not an individual councillor. The resident did not proceed with a formal complaint.
7	1	Member of the public	Complaint about the introduction of a Low Traffic Neighbourhood		The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
8	3	Member of the public	Lack of response by Ward councillors to emails regarding Highbury Meadows.	N	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
9	1	Member of the public	A tweet by a councillor.	N	The complaint withdrew the complaint prior to an investigation taking place.
10	1	Member of the public	Complaint about the introduction of a Low Traffic Neighbourhood	N	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
11	3	Member of the public	Ward councillors not responding to emails.		The Code of Conduct for councillors does not require councillors to respond to every communication. The resident was advised that no breach of the Code of Conduct had occurred.

3.12 A formal investigation initiated in the previous year into the conduct of a councillor arising from a complaint by an ex-member of staff was concluded and the complaint was not upheld by the Monitoring Officer.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Implications

The Council spent £7,744 on training courses for councillors in the 2020/21 financial year.

4.2 Legal Implications

The Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members (section 27(1) Localism Act 2011). The Council has adopted a Code dealing with the conduct that is expected of Members and Co-opted Members when they are acting in that capacity (as required by section 27(2) Localism Act 2011). The Code has been revised to incorporate the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020.

4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

None applicable to this report.

4.4 Resident Impact Assessment

No resident impacts arise directly from this report.

Appendices: None.

Background papers: None.

Final Report Clearance

Signed by



17 September
2021

Director of Law and Governance

Date

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