

Hambleton District Council

Report To: Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

Date: 20 October 2020

From: Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Subject: **Annual Report – Code of Conduct Complaints**

Portfolio Holder: Governance
Councillor Mrs I Sanderson

Wards Affected: All Wards

1.0 Purpose and Background

- 1.1 In accordance with the findings in the recent publication by the Committee on Standards in Public Life entitled ‘Local Government Ethical Standards – A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life’, this report sets out the Monitoring Officer’s Annual Report on matters relating to ethical governance, including details of any complaint handling activity in relation to allegations of breaches of a code of conduct.
- 1.2 Having robust ethical governance policies and procedures in place helps to maintain openness, transparency and probity in the way in which the Council conducts its business. This in turn should help increase public confidence in local governance by maintaining high standards of conduct.

2.0 Allegations regarding Code of Conduct Matters

- 2.1 Between April 2019 and March 2020 the Monitoring Officer received a total of eleven complaints alleging breaches of a Code of Member Conduct. Two of these involved Hambleton District Councillors and nine related to Parish/Town Councillors.
- 2.2 Of these complaints three were referred to the Standards Hearings Panel for adjudication. The Panel decided in each case that there had been no breach of the applicable Code of Conduct.
- 2.3 Two Parish councillors resigned from office so the complaints did not proceed.
- 2.4 A further two complaints did not proceed because the complainants did not respond to repeated requests for further information (which was necessarily required in order to properly assess the allegations).

2.5 The remaining four complaints were dismissed without a hearing because (either) the actions complained of did not fall within the scope of the applicable Codes of Conduct, or the Councillors were acting in a private capacity at the time of the allegations.

2.6 There are no overarching standards issues or themes to report as a result of these complaints.

3.0 Hambleton District Council's Code of Member Conduct

3.1 Following a recommendation from the Committee the full Council (in February 2020) approved an amended Code of Member Conduct for Hambleton District Council, and an amended Register of Interests Form.

4.0 Link to Council Priorities

4.1 This report supports the Council's foundation of strong governance.

5.0 Risk Assessment

5.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 It is a requirement that an annual report on code of conduct complaints is presented to the Audit Governance and Standards Committee.

7.0 Equalities and Diversity Issues

7.1 There are no issues associated with this report.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 That the Committee notes the report of the Monitoring Officer.

Gary Nelson
Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Background papers: None

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