

Complaints Received Against Members for the Year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Authority has a statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members. To this end we have collected data about the number and type of complaints received against Members during the year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 1.2 This report identifies the areas of complaint and suggests actions to improve performance for the coming year.

Recommendation that:	a Members note complaints made against Members during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025; and b Members make suggestions to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of the Authority.
-----------------------------	--

2 Background

- 2.1 At a meeting of the full Authority on 20 October 2021, Members approved a Code of Conduct and a procedure for investigating complaints against Members.
- 2.2 The Authority has a statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members. Under the Authority's Scheme of Delegations, it is the responsibility of the Governance Committee to ensure the Authority complies with this statutory duty.
- 2.3 For the year beginning 1 April 2024 and ending on 31 March 2025, the Monitoring Officer received one complaint regarding the behaviour of members. Details of the complaint are contained in Annex 1.
- 2.4 Work will be undertaken to provide training for all Members on the Code of Conduct and training on dealing with complaints made against members will be provided for members of this committee.
- 2.5 The Monitoring Officer continue to have informal discussions with members as necessary to remind them of the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. There is a continuing need for informal discussions between the MO and members on occasion to ensure adherence to declarations of interest and to processes.
- 2.6 Members are reminded of the need to be familiar with our Code of Conduct, appreciating it is how others perceive behaviours not necessarily what the individual intends. Members are asked to consider whether any further training would be considered appropriate either to improve conduct and standards generally.

3 Policy Context

- 3.1 Reviewing complaints and identifying trends over time will enable us to identify areas of concern where the Authority is not performing as well as it might against our Business Plan.

- 3.2 The review of complaints against Members enables the Authority to improve its level of service to roll out training and review processes where this will improve performance of committees. Identifying trends will enable us to see where we need to improve our service delivery.

4 Options

- 4.1 Members simply note complaints made against Members during this period and make no suggestions to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of the Authority.
- 4.2 Members note complaints made against Members during this period and make suggestions to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of the Authority.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 Members note complaints made against Members during this period and make suggestions to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of the Authority.

6 Best Value Implications

- 6.1 The report has no Best Value implications.

7 Finance Considerations

- 7.1 The report has no finance considerations. However, Members should be aware that any matter that has not been dealt with to the satisfaction of complainants may be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman. Any complaint to the Ombudsman which is upheld may result in the Authority having to pay compensation to the complainant as may be considered reasonable by the Ombudsman.

8 Risk

- 8.1 The monitoring of complaints received by the Authority about Members will help us to identify any areas of risk and enable the Authority to take appropriate steps to either negate or minimise that risk.

9 Legal Considerations

- 9.1 The Authority has a statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members. The Authority is also obliged to have in place a Code of Conduct, a procedure for investigating complaints against Members and ensure that any complaints made are investigated in accordance with that procedure.
- 9.2 Under the Authority's Scheme of Delegation it is the responsibility of the Governance Committee to ensure that the Authority complies with its statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011.

10 Diversity Implications

10.1 This report has no diversity implications.

11 Sustainability

11.1 There are no significant environmental, economic, and social effects.

Background Papers	Individual Legal Services matter files
Author/Post	Julie Wood, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Solicitor
Responsible Director	Stephen Ratcliffe, Director of Sustainable Development and Monitoring Officer.
Date Written	17 April 2025

Annex 1: Details of Complaints

Complaint:

The Calendar of Committee dates were brought before Exec Board and Committee Chairs in November 2023 for discussion. There was an opportunity for potential change to the meetings at that stage. At the meeting of Committee Chairs meeting dates were discussed and the Chair of the Authority, Ms Hunt, made it clear that, unless a change needs to take place because of an external event (i.e. clash with NP Conference) or an unplanned event such as a ministerial/royal visit or accounts not being ready for signature, meetings are to take place on the dates that they are set and advertised, particularly as other members of the committee and members of the public will have organised their diaries to attend. If there is enough business for the meeting to take place, the Deputy Chair will be called upon to chair the meeting should a Chair be absent.

Member X requested changes to meeting dates and asked various officers (including the Member Services Co-ordinator and the Authority Solicitor) to change the meeting dates, on each occasion receiving the same response, finally escalating the response to the Director of Sustainable Development, Mr S Ratcliffe. This left the Member Services Co-Ordinator to feel their role and themselves to be considered worthless. The way in which the member pursued her agenda to have committee meetings changed was considered to amount to indirect intimidation and bullying by reverting to a senior officer because previous officer had not given her the “right answer.”

Decision:

The Monitoring Officer and Director of Sustainable Development, Mr S Ratcliffe, spoke to the Member at length. Whilst he did not conduct an investigation and thereby come to any conclusions, he raised the matters brought to his attention and asked the member to reflect and adjust behaviours. He also asked that the member to re-familiarise themselves with the Member Code of Conduct.