



Report to: Audit & Governance Committee Meeting - 27 July 2022

Director Lead: Sue Bearman, Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Lead Officer: Nigel Hill, Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services, Ext 5243

Report Summary	
Report Title	Annual Standards Report For The Period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022
Purpose of Report	To consider the Annual Standards Report for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
Recommendations	That the annual report be noted.
Reason for Recommendation	To provide Members with details of Code of Conduct complaints received in 2021/22, and an update on related matters.

1.0 Background

1.1 At its meeting on 17 May 2022, the Council adopted Executive Arrangements, also known as the Cabinet System. Under the new arrangements, the Audit & Governance Committee has responsibility for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members of the Council. It is also responsible for maintaining an overview of the Member Code of Conduct and arrangements for dealing with complaints.

2.0 Code of Conduct Complaints

2.1 The Monitoring Officer recorded nine formal complaints within the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022; of these six related to District Councillors and three related to Town or Parish Councillors. Eight complaints were considered, and it was determined following appropriate consultation with the Independent Persons that no further action was required in respect of these. The complainants were notified accordingly. One complaint is outstanding at the time of writing.

3.0 Formal Investigation and Code of Conduct Hearings

3.1 There were no formal investigations or Code of Conduct Hearings required for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

4.0 Register of Members Interests

4.1 Register of Interests Forms for Newark & Sherwood District Council Members were issued to all Members following the District Council elections held on 2 May 2019. These were required to be completed and returned within 28 days of the election. These were returned by all Members and were published on the Council's website.

4.2 As Members will be aware, a new Code of Conduct was adopted on 13 July 2021. This required a revised Register of Members Interests Form to be issued to all Members for completion. These have been returned by all Members of the Council and are published on the Council's website:

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

4.3 All newly elected Members, following recent by-elections, have also completed their Register of Members Interest Forms.

4.4 Town and Parish Councillors are also required to complete a Register of Interests Form within 28 days of the election. These are also published on the Council's website: <https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/parishcouncils/register-of-interests-for-parish-councillors>

4.5 Regular communication is held with parish councils to ensure, as far as possible, that all their Register of Member Interest Forms are sent to us for publication. Where forms are outstanding, regular reminders are sent to those parishes. Also, when we become aware of new Members who have been appointed through co-option to fill vacancies, the parishes are reminded of the requirement to submit the completed returns to us as soon as practicable.

5.0 Local Government Association Guidance

5.1 In response to concerns that those in public office face increasing levels of unacceptable behaviour from others, the Local Government Association has recently published a Councillors' Guide to handling harassment, abuse and intimidation. The aim of the Guide is to provide councillors and councils with practical steps they can follow to decrease the likelihood of experiencing unacceptable behaviour, and ideas on how to respond should an incident occur.

5.2 The Guide will be circulated to all District Councillors, and Parish and Town Clerks.

5.2 The Guide includes a section on how council officers can support their members. Officers will consider whether any changes in practice or procedure are appropriate in light of this guidance.

5.0 Implications

None.

Background Papers and Published Documents

The LGA Councillors' Guide to handling harassment, abuse and intimidation is published - <https://www.local.gov.uk/advice-supporting-councillors>