

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Meeting	Standards Committee
Date	7 March 2024
Report Author	Chair of the Standard's Committee
Status	For Information
Classification:	Unrestricted

Executive Summary:

The Chair's annual report summarises and comments on the work of the Standards Committee for the period March 2023 - March 2024.

Recommendation(s):

That members note the report and refer the report to Council.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

None arising from this report.

Legal

The role of the Standards Committee is to promote high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct. This report relates to the Committee's function to monitor the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct.

Corporate

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Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- *To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
- *To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it*
- *To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- **Priority five:** *To work efficiently for you*

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Being my 3rd Annual Report as Chair of the Standards Committee it is pleasing to report that there was a reduction in the number of complaints made to the committee within the last year.
- 1.2. With the advent of a General Election can I please remind members on their use of social media.
- 1.3. There was an ever growing number of media platforms in the public domain and with this in mind the Social Media Policy and its use was currently under review.

2.0 Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) and Standards Committee Meetings

- 2.1 CRWP met on 9 November 2023 and 27 February 2024. We discussed the following: Key decision definitions, the council's policy framework, amendments to the council's procedure regarding the frequency of questions, contract procedure rules, councillor / officer protocol and revisions to the constitutional change process.
- 2.2 The Standards Committee meetings scheduled for 31 May 2023, 12 September 2023 and 9 November 2023 were cancelled due to lack of business.

3.0 Complaints about Member Behaviour Considered by a Standards Sub Committee of Thanet District Council 2023/24

- 3.1 The Council received 16 complaints raised under the Members' Code of Conduct between March 2023 and March 2024.
- 3.2 Of the 16 complaints received in this period, one was considered to be corporate complaints not concerning councillors and was therefore referred to the corporate complaints system. Six were considered not to meet the jurisdiction test. Three

complaints are not yet concluded. Six cases were therefore progressed for consideration by a sub-committee.

- 3.3 Of those assessed by sub-committees, 1 complaint was referred to the police for investigation and an independent investigator appointed by the council. Additionally, 1 resulted in a decision of no further action due to the complaint being unfounded.
- 3.4 Of the remaining 4 complaints, all were considered to be suitable for the informal resolution process. The sub-committee made various recommendations back to the complainants and subject members. No complaints were referred for further investigation.
- 3.5 The sub-committee dealt with a number of complaints from both councillors and members of the public about allegations relating to disclosures of interests, particularly relating to posts on social media sites.

4.0 Thanks

- 4.1 Can I thank the monitoring officers, staff in Democratic Services and the other independent persons for their support and help over the last year.

Annex List

Standards Complaints Table 2023-24

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell, Director of Corporate Services

Legal: Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)