

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Report Title:** Councillor Complaints and Ethical Governance Update

**Name of Committee:** Audit and Ethics Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 28 September 2023

**Report Director:** Chief Officer - Legal and Governance

**Portfolio:** Finance, Performance, Legal and Governance

**Ward Relevance:** All

**Prior Consultation:** None

**Contact Officer:** Aftab Razzaq, Chief Officer - Legal and Governance, aftab.razzaq@rugby.gov.uk

**Public or Private:** Public

**Report Subject to Call-In:** Yes

**Report En-Bloc:** No

**Forward Plan:** No

**Corporate Priorities:** This report relates to the following priority(ies):  
 Rugby is an environmentally sustainable place, where we work together to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. (C)  
 Rugby has a diverse and resilient economy that benefits and enables opportunities for all residents. (E)  
 Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected. (HC)  
 Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation. (O)  
[Corporate Strategy 2021-2024](#)  
 This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but

**Summary:** As part of the council's Corporate Strategy and within the Organisation outcome, there is a commitment to maintain high levels of ethical standards by all councillors and provide biannual reports to Audit and Ethics Committee in relation to number of complaints and overall ethical governance.

<b>Financial Implications:</b>	None arising directly from this report.
<b>Risk Management/Health and Safety Implications:</b>	None arising directly from this report.
<b>Environmental Implications:</b>	None arising directly from this report.
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	None arising directly from this report.
<b>Equality and Diversity:</b>	None arising directly from this report.
<b>Options:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	The report be noted.
<b>Reasons for Recommendation:</b>	Not applicable.

**Audit and Ethics Committee - 28 September 2023**

**Councillor Complaints and Ethical Governance Update**

**Public Report of the Chief Officer - Legal and Governance**

**Recommendation**

The report be noted.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

As part of the council's Corporate Strategy and within the Organisation outcome, there is a commitment to maintain high levels of ethical standards by all councillors and provide biannual reports to this Committee in relation to number of complaints and overall ethical governance.

This is outlined within this report.

**2. ETHICAL AND GOVERNANCE UPDATE**

As part of the council's Corporate Objectives, there continues to be a focus on maintaining high standards of ethics and governance.

Over the past few months work has been undertaken in conjunction with the LGA. This has included the delivery of training sessions and supporting the council's work in respect of the relationship between councillors and officers.

There is also a present workstream in respect of a review of the council's Constitution and this will form part of a recommendation to the Constitution Working Group and thereafter Full Council.

The council has also recently introduced an Internal Constitution. This provides an internal central document for all officers to provide clarity on processes and the required ways of working. Again, this supports the council's work in maintaining strong governance.

**3. TRAINING**

Democratic Services have been liaising with training co-ordinators from the various political parties in respect of the formulation of the councillor training programme.

The council also adopted a new Learning and Development Policy for all councillors. A key area within this policy focuses on councillors identifying areas of training and goals throughout the municipal year. This engagement will also support the formulation of the councillor training programme.

Within the training programme the following supports ethics and governance:

- **Code of Conduct** – this is compulsory for all new councillors and is strongly encouraged for all existing councillors. It provides an overview of the Code of Conduct and the responsibilities for all councillors.

Attendance: 33%

3 new councillors did not attend.

- **Public Speaking Skills and The Role of a Councillor** – this was a non-compulsory session provided by the LGA and provided an overview of the role and responsibilities of a councillor. The session also included public speaking within council meetings.

Attendance: 43%

- **Governance** – this was a non-compulsory session providing an overview of the council decision making processes and overall governance structure.

Attendance: 45%

As reflected within the present municipal year there have been sessions held in respect of governance and decision making and these will remain in place. This will be alongside other key areas such as the Code of Conduct and social media.

It is important that councillors attend such sessions as a sound understanding of these key topics ensures members can effectively carry out their duties and importantly high standards of ethical governance are maintained.

A key point of note for consideration is whether the council and importantly this Committee would require the above sessions to be made mandatory for all councillors.

#### **4. COUNCILLOR AND OFFICER PROTOCOL**

The council is continuing with its journey in the implementation of the Councillor and Officer Protocol.

This has included a workshop between councillors and officers that took place on 12 September. This workshop focused on feedback and the various pillars within the protocol.

The working relationship between councillors and officers are at the very heart of how the council operates effectively and how each party carries out their functions. This also supports strong ethics and governance.

#### **5. COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS**

As set out within the council's Constitution there is a separate complaint process relating to councillors. Councillors are required to uphold the Councillor Code of Conduct and any potential breach of this is duly investigated. These matters are investigated by the council's Monitoring Officer.

In addition to Rugby Borough councillors, there is also the responsibility to investigate parish council complaints.

The number of complaints during the municipal year are as follows:

### **Borough Council Complaints**

- Quarter 1 – 1
- Quarter 2 to date – 3

### **Parish Council Complaints**

- Quarter 1 – 0
- Quarter 2 to date – 0

Several complaints are dealt with informally and therefore are not required to go through the formal complaint process.

It is acknowledged that there needs to be greater expediency in dealing with councillor complaints. On this basis further work has been undertaken internally to ensure the required processes are implemented to address this expediency.

In addition, there will also be performance measures put in place in respect of councillor complaints. This will focus upon the length of time taken to process a councillor complaint and this will include a required timescale to deal with such complaints. This deadline in dealing with complaints is not made clear within the present complaint protocol and it proposed that this be amended.

The incorporation of such measures supports the council's corporate objectives and aspirations towards a culture of performance management. These performance measures will be shared as part of these scheduled update reports.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Within this report it is acknowledged that the Councillor Complaint Protocol is amended with relevant timescales incorporated. This will be supported by required performance measures that will be shared with this committee. Finally, it is recognised that training forms a key part in the council achieving the required standards of ethics and governance. On this basis, consideration needs to be given in respect mandatory training.

It is important that the council maintains the highest possible ethical standards. This can only be achieved by putting in place a robust framework and providing councillors with the various tools to understand their roles and the implications if such standards are not met. The continued training, engagement with councillors and overall review will ensure that this corporate objective is met.

**Name of Meeting:** Audit and Ethics Committee  
**Date of Meeting:** 28 September 2023  
**Subject Matter:** Councillor Complaints and Ethical Governance Update  
**Originating Department:** Legal and Governance

**DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY**       **YES**                       **NO**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>Doc No</b>	<b>Title of Document and Hyperlink</b>

The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

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Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

<b>Doc No</b>	<b>Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A</b>