

Standards and Ethics

Quarter 1 Report

2019-2020

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Introduction

This is the quarterly report to the Audit & Governance Committee detailing both the figures for the Ethical Indicators and the figures for the Local Determination of Complaints process for 2019/20.

For clarification purposes the months covered by the quarters are as follows:

Quarter 1 - 1 April to 30 June

Quarter 2 - 1 July to 30 September

Quarter 3 - 1 October to 31 December

Quarter 4 - 1 January to 31 March

The report is split into 2 parts for ease of reference; Part 1 refers to the local determination of complaints, part 2 is the table showing the ethical indicators figures.

The report will enable the Audit & Governance Committee to build up a picture over time of how many complaints are received and where these are coming from. The parts of the Code of Conduct which have been breached will also be recorded to enable training to be targeted effectively.

Local Determination of Complaints

The Monitoring Officer received 1 complaint in Quarter 1 of 2019/20.

2.1 Assessment Sub-committee Decisions

There has been no Assessment Sub-committee meetings in this quarter.

The Monitoring Officer pursues an informal dispute resolution process prior to initiating formal proceedings via the Sub-committee route.

1 complaint has been resolved informally in Quarter 1.

2.2 Timeliness of Decision

The Standards for England Guidance stated that the Assessment Sub-committee should complete its initial assessment of an allegation “within an average of 20 working days” to reach a decision on what should happen with the complaint. The Council has taken this standard and adapted it under the new rules to aim to hold an Assessment Sub-committee within 20 working days of notifying the parties that informal resolution is not possible.

2.3 Review Requests

There have been no review requests in Quarter 1. Review requests can only be made following a decision of ‘No further Action’ by the Assessment Sub-committee where there is submission of new evidence or information by the complainant.

2.4 Subsequent Referrals

None to report – see above.

2.5 Outcome of Investigations

There were no investigations concluded in this period.

2.6 Parts of the Code Breached

This section is intended to show where there are patterns forming to enable the Audit and Governance Committee to determine where there needs to be further training for Councillors. Targeting training in this way makes it more sustainable and, hopefully, more effective.

So far this year, the following areas of the code were found to have been breached:

N/A

Ethical Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20
Instances of concerns raised re Modern Slavery	n/a	0	n/a		n/a		n/a	
Instances of concerns re Modern Slavery referred to national referral agencies	n/a	0	n/a		n/a		n/a	
Number of whistle blowing incidents reported	0	0	0					
Number of Challenges to procurements	n/a	0	n/a		n/a		n/a	
Public interest Reports	0	0	0					
Objections to the Councils Accounts	0	0	0					
Disciplinary action relating to breaches of the Member/Officer Protocol	0	0	0					
Follow up action relating to breaches of the Member/Officer Protocol	0	0	0					

Freedom of Information Requests

	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20
Total Number	43	84	57		69			
% answered on time	84%	99%	96%		100%			
Average per month	14	28	19		23			
Average response time (days)	12	11	9		11			
Business as usual	58	59	86		55			
Transfers	29	18	32		32			
Subject access requests	3	2	3		2			
Non-compliant requests	0	0	2		0			
Appeals	0	0	0		0			
Withheld due to exemption/fees	7	0	11		5			
Environmental Information Requests - Land Charges Searches (personal)	40	437	47		5			

The total number of FOI requests year on year are double but looking back through each quarter illustrate a steady increase.

All but one request was answered on time and response time appears to be fairly stable.

It was not felt that information in relation to any request should be withheld in the last quarter.

Environmental Information Requests was previously known as Land Charges Searches. Following discussions with the Land Charges department it was felt that this was a more accurate way to report. The figures are therefore distorted and there is not the spike in requests as currently appears.

Definitions

Business as usual Information requested can be sent quickly and easily within the normal course of business

Land Charges specific information about a particular property

Ombudsman Complaint a customer has followed Stage 1 and 2 complaints procedure but unhappy with the outcome they are entitled to take complaint to the Local government Ombudsman who will decide if the Council has a case to answer.

Subject Access Request a request by an individual to see information an organisation holds on them

Transfers requests received that fall out of our remit i.e. Adult social Care or Highways

Environmental Information Request a right for any person to request access to environmental information held by public authorities.