

# Standards and Ethics

## Quarter 1 Report

2024-2025

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# Introduction

This is the quarterly report to the Audit and Governance Committee detailing both the figures for the Ethical Indicators and the figures for the Local Determination of Complaints process for 2024/25.

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 two 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 and 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 two complaints in Quarter 1 of 2024/25 (1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024).

One complaint received in Quarter 1 was unable to be progressed as it was determined that the initial tests were not met.

One complaint received in Quarter 1 is still ongoing.

## 2.1 Assessment Sub-committee Decisions

There has been one Assessment Sub-committee meeting in this quarter. The Assessment Sub-committee meeting was regarding one complaint received in Quarter 4 of 2023/24 and it was referred to the Monitoring Officer to take further action which has now been completed.

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

No complaints have been resolved informally in Quarter 1.

## 2.2 Timeliness of Decision

The Local Government Association [guidance](#) states that where the decision has been delegated to an officer the authority should aim to complete their initial assessment of an allegation within 15 working days of receiving a complaint. Where the assessment is sent to a committee, the committee should be set up along similar timescales.

The Council has taken this standard and included it in the Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints to aim to hold an Assessment Sub-committee within 15 working days of notifying the parties that informal resolution is not possible

# Local Determination of Complaints contd.

## **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**

None to report – see above

## **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

# Complaints made to the Monitoring Officer under the Code of Conduct during Q1 2024/25

<u>Otr 1</u> <u>24/25</u>	<u>Complaint from</u>	<u>About district/ parish councillor</u>	<u>Regarding</u>	<u>status</u>
	Member of the public	District Councillor	Accusation of trespassing and fly-tipping	Initial tests not met
	Member of the public	Parish Councillor	Concerns around planning application and predetermination	Ongoing

# Ethical Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	22/ 23	23/ 24	24/ 25	21/ 22	22/ 23	23/ 24	21/ 22	22/ 23	23/ 24	21/ 22	22/ 23	23/ 24
Instances of concerns raised re Modern Slavery	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Instances of concerns raised re Modern Slavery referred to national agencies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of whistle blowing incidents reported	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Challenges to procurements	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Public interest Reports	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Objections to the Councils Accounts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disciplinary action relating to breaches of the Member/Officer Protocol	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Follow up action relating to breaches of the Member/Officer Protocol	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Use of RIPA powers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

# Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	22/23	23/24	24/25	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24
Total Number (FOIs)	147	157	122	107	122	196	90	108	157	196	148	194
% answered on time	51%	93%	89%	71.9%	79%	85.7%	95.1%	60%	91.7%	78.17%	91%	92%
Average per month	49	52	39	36	41	71	30	38	52	65	49	64
Average response time (days)	7	11	11	13	9	12	10	14	10	15	13	11
Withheld due to exemption/fees (FOI and BAU)*	0	13	18	12	0	2	15	7	13	13	3	19
Transfers (TFRs)	29	18	22	12	21	15	24	18	20	28	26	38
Subject access requests (SARs)	3	11	11	2	6	11	5	5	9	13	10	8
Internal Reviews	1	1	0	2	3	2	1	3	1	2	1	0
Environmental Information Requests/ Land Charges Searches (personal)	4	6	492	491	4	7	336	7	360	1	7	409

- There has been a decrease in the number of FOIs received since the previous quarter. However, the % responded to on time has dropped slightly.
- Most of the FOIs that were not responded to within the deadline are from two services. Staffing issues would seem to have been a contributing factor.
- A new escalation process is being introduced which is aimed at improving the % answered on time.
- There have been several complicated Subject Access Requests received during this quarter. These were responded to within the timescales.



# FOI Data for Q1 24/25

	Subject Access Requests											
	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	22/23	23/24	24/25	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24
Total number received	3	11	11	2	6	11	5	5	9	13	10	8
% answered on time			100%						78%			88%
Internal reviews			1									

	Freedom of Information Requests											
	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	22/23	23/24	24/25	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24
Total number received	147	157	122	107	122	196	90	108	157	196	148	194
% answered on time	51%	93%	89%	72%	79%	86%	95%	60%	92%	78%	91%	92%
Internal reviews	1	1	0	2	3	2	1	3	1	2	1	0

	Environmental Information Requests											
	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	22/23	23/24	24/25	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24
Total number received	4	6	4	NH	4	5	NH	7	3	1	7	3
% answered on time			100%			80%			100%			100%
Internal reviews			0			0			0			0

# Definitions

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

Land Charges - specific information about a particular property.

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