



East Devon District Council
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Agenda for Standards Committee Thursday, 20th November, 2025, 9.00 am

Members of Standards Committee

Councillors: E Rylance (Chair), J Bailey, I Chubb, T Dumper, S Hughes, J Loudoun, J Whibley, Kuh, P Coulter, R Wood, Goscomb, K Bryant, P Stott and Sexton and substitute members

Parish Representatives: P Stott and S Sexton

Independent Persons: D Kuh and P Coulter

Independent Representatives: R Wood, M Goscomb, K Bryant

Venue: Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton

Contact: Debbie Meakin;

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(or group number 01395 517546)

Wednesday, 12 November 2025

1 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 5)

2 Apologies

3 Declarations of interest

Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)

4 Public speaking

Information on [public speaking](#) is available online

5 Matters of urgency

Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online

6 Confidential/exempt item(s)

To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the Press) have been excluded. There are no items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

7 **Appointment of Independent Representatives, Independent Persons and Town and Parish Representatives** (Pages 6 - 8)

8 **Applications for dispensations** (Pages 9 - 11)

- 9 **Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework consultation update** (Pages 12 - 16)
- 10 **Code of Conduct Complaints update** (Pages 17 - 26)
- 11 **Gifts and Hospitality update** (Pages 27 - 31)

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

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EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held at Blackdown House, Honiton on 17 July 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.04 am

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 16th January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

2 Declarations of interest

None.

3 Public speaking

None.

4 Matters of urgency

None.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None.

6 Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members update

The revised protocol was presented to Committee for recommending forward to the Constitutional Working Party for inclusion in the revision of the Constitution. Included were suggestions made by a meeting of some of the Standards Committee members in April which was inquorate.

Additional comments on the protocol included minor amendments to the wording on paragraphs 8.8, 9.2, 10.1, 10.3 and 11.

RECOMMENDED to the Constitutional Working Party for recommending forward to Council, the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members for inclusion in the revised Constitution.

7 Review of Member Code of Conduct

The periodic review of the Code of Conduct had been undertaken. No changes had been made to the Model Code issued by the Local Government Association since May 2021. Whilst there had been recognition of some confusion from both the public and elected members on the definitions of "other registerable interest" and non-registerable interests" to date, it was considered that having a national based model outweighs those disadvantages. The pending local government reorganisation was also considered as a factor in weighing up any changes to the existing code.

On balance, the recommendation was that no changes should be made to the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2022.

RECOMMENDED no changes at the current time to the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2022.

8 **Draft Annual Report to Council**

The committee agreed to put forward their Annual Report to the next scheduled meeting of Council in October 2025.

Suggestions were made for emphasising the sharing of good practice examples for training purposes, both from previous case decisions from other authorities, and from case law. Stress on the low attendance of District Councillors was also welcomed in the report and that issue had been raised with the Group Leaders.

RESOLVED for the Annual Report of the Standards Committee to be put to Council for their October meeting.

9 **Code of conduct complaints update**

The report gave details of complaints covering the period April 2025 to July 2025.

Members of the committee congratulated the team involved, both officers and the work of the Independent Persons, which had led to the reduction of complaints received, due to effective engagement in pre-complaint discussion.

Improvements to the related web pages also helped manage expectation of the process.

The committee noted the report.

10 **Standards Committee Work Programme**

The committee agreed the 2025/26 work programme. The update report on gifts and hospitality would be included for the November scheduled meeting of the committee.

11 **Standards update**

The committee were updated on planned code of conduct refresher training for all District Councillors later in the year.

The committee proceeded to discuss two recent cases for training purposes after the meeting was closed by the Chair.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

E Rylance (Chair)
T Dumper
S Hughes
J Loudoun

Independent Persons

P Coulter

Independent Representatives

R Wood

M Goscomb

K Bryant

Town and Parish Representatives

P Stott

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

R Collins

Officers in attendance:

Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Katie Webb, Property Lawyer

Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Apologies:

D Kuh, Independent Person

S Sexton, Town and Parish Representative

Cllr J Bailey

Cllr J Whibley

Chair

Date:



Report to: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting 16 January 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Appointment of Independent Representatives, Independent Persons and Town and Parish Representatives

Report summary:

The Standards Committee includes two non-voting Parish Councillor representatives (with three spaces) and 3 non-voting independent members who play valuable input into the work of the Standards Committee. In addition, the Council has two Independent Persons who have a key role in the consideration of Code of Conduct complaints, alongside the Monitoring Officer. A number of those roles were due to expire this year and the Committee agreed a recruitment process to earlier this year. The first attempt at advertising only resulted in a couple of applications so the decision was made to re-advertise in September 2025. This report updates on the outcome of the advertising process, the interviews that followed and presents to the Committee the recommendation of the Interview Panel which consisted of the Chair, Vice Chair and Cllr Dumper together with the Monitoring Officer.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That the Standards Committee:-

1. Recommend to Council the appointment of:
 - i. Mr Steve Jupp and Mr Philip Wilde as co-opted non-voting Independent Members on the Standards Committee for a term of 4 years or until local government reorganisation, whichever is the sooner
 - ii. Cllr Chris Lockyer of Sidmouth Town Council and Cllr Francis Pullman of Westhill Parish Council as co-opted non-voting Town/Parish representatives on the Standards Committee for a term of 4 years or until the local government reorganisation, whichever is the sooner
 - iii. Mr Martin Goscomb and Mr Pat Coulter as Independent Persons for a term of 4 years or until local government reorganisation, whichever is the sooner

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the critical Independent and Town and Parish perspective on the Committee is retained and that the Council is compliant with the Localism Act 2011 in relation to the appointment of Independent Persons.

Officer: melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☒ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; The Authority has a legal duty to appoint an Independent Person and would be unable to carry out its statutory duties relating to the Code of Conduct without appointing at least one IP. Any subject member who is subject to a Code of Conduct complaint or Standards Committee investigation has a statutory right to consult with the IP. If that is not possible because there is no IP, the Authority is at risk of challenge.

Links to background information None

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ Better homes and communities for all
- ☐ A greener East Devon
- ☐ A resilient economy
- ☒ Quality Services

Report in full

1. The Localism Act 2011 requires the Authority to have arrangements in place for dealing with complaints of breaches of the Code of Conduct. This must include provision for the appointment of at least one Independent Person (IP). The Council currently has two IP's. In addition, the Council has three Independent Representatives and two Town and Parish representatives (with one vacancy) on the Standards Committee. These are co-opted non-voting appointments. These representatives provide critical independent and town and parish perspectives.
2. With the exception of Cllr Sexton and Mr Ken Bryant, all of these appointments were due to expire this year. The Committee therefore agreed to conduct a recruitment process and delegated authority was granted to the Monitoring Officer to prepare the recruitment paperwork in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and to conduct the recruitment process on our website and via social media, as well as circulating details to Town and Parish Councils.
3. The first recruitment attempt only resulted in two applications and the decision was therefore made to advertise a second time. In total, combining the applications for both recruitment processes, there were 21 applications for the three roles. Those applications were shortlisted by the Chair and Monitoring Officer and 12 applicants were invited to interviews on 2nd and 10th October 2025.

4. The interview panel comprised three members of the Committee namely the Chair, Vice Chair and Cllr Dumper, supported by the Monitoring Officer. After a robust interview process the highest scoring applicants and those recommended to the Committee for appointment were:-
 - a) Mr Steve Jupp and Mr Philip Wilde as co-opted non-voting Independent Members
 - b) Cllr Chris Lockyer of Sidmouth Town Council and Cllr Francis Pullman of Westhill Parish Council as co-opted non-voting Town/Parish representatives
 - c) Mr Martin Goscomb and Mr Pat Coulter as Independent Persons.
5. All six successful applicants are recommended to be appointed for a term of 4 years or until local government reorganisation, whichever is the sooner.
6. The appointees will receive an annual allowance of £400 in accordance with the adopted Scheme of Member Allowances.
7. As appointments to Committees are made by Full Council, the Committee are invited to recommend the above appointments to Full Council. The next ordinary meeting of Full Council will take place on 10 December 2025.
8. The opportunity is taken to thank Cllr Pauline Stott (Town/Parish Representative), Professor Diana Kuh (Independent Person) and Mr Robert Wood (Independent Member) whose terms of office will expire on 10 December 2025 for all their hard work, commitment and valued contribution to the work of the Committee over many years.

Financial implications:

There are no financial implications directly arising from this recruitment process as the positions will be advertised on our website, on social media and through Town and Parish Councils. The successful applicants will receive the same allowance as existing role holders in accordance with the Council's adopted Scheme of Member Allowances.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are dealt with in the body of the report.

Report to: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting 20 November 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Applications for Dispensations

Report summary:

To consider applications for dispensations from Members of this Council to enable them to take part in matters relating to devolution and/or local government reorganisation. The Committee considered and approved a number of applications for dispensations for LGR/devolution in early 2025. Since then, there have been the County Council elections. The Monitoring Officer has therefore received applications from members appointed to the County Council in that election. This report therefore invites the Committee to approve granting dispensations to members of the County Council as outlined in this report, such dispensation to last until the next District Council elections or Local Government Reorganisation (vesting date), whichever is the sooner.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That the Standards Committee:-

1. Approve the granting of dispensations to dual-hatted County and District Council members to enable them to discuss and vote on any matter relating to devolution or local government reorganisation in Devon. Such dispensations to take effect from the date of the meeting.
2. That the dispensations are approved on the basis that granting the dispensations is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area.
3. That the dispensations are granted until the next District Council elections or until the date of vesting for a new Unitary Council, whichever is the sooner.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable members of Council who are dual hatted members to be involved in the very important debate regarding devolution and Local Government Re-organisation in Devon which will have significant impacts for the residents that those members serve.

Officer: melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
☒ Communications and Democracy
☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Given that Members are elected to act in the public interest and the interests arise due to their connection with another public body rather than in relation to their own personal interests and in relation to employees, TUPE would apply in any event, the risk of granting the dispensation is considered to be low.

Links to background information None

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ Better homes and communities for all
- ☐ A greener East Devon
- ☐ A resilient economy
- ☒ Quality Services

Report in full

1. In May 2022, the Council adopted a Member Code of Conduct based on the LGA Model Code of Conduct. The Code requires the registration of pecuniary interests and 'Other Registerable Interests' which are prescribed. In terms of declaring interests, a member has to declare and leave a meeting during the discussion and vote (unless there is a dispensation) where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest or where something directly relates to the finances or well-being of one of their Other Registerable Interests or where something affects the finances or well-being of one of their Other Registerable Interests and it is affected more than most and a reasonable person would think their judgment would be clouded.
2. The Government has issued proposals in relation to devolution and local government reorganisation which impacts upon Devon. The Council has a number of members who are dual-hatted members of Devon County Council.
3. The following dual-hatted members have applied to the Monitoring Officer for dispensations to enable them to take part in the discussions and debate. They are seeking dispensations in relation to any matter relating to devolution or local government reorganisation in Devon, for a period up until the next election or Local Government Reorganisation, to enable them to represent the views of their residents:-
 - a. Cllr Nick Hookway
 - b. Cllr Paul Hayward
 - c. Cllr Paul Arnott (not intended to be used in relation to the current creation of alternative plans for LGR in Devon)
4. The dual-hatted members have been elected to this Council to represent the views of their constituents and as the biggest local government issue affecting Devon at the current time,

if they are excluded from being involved in the discussion and vote, then they are potentially being denied the opportunity to represent the views of those constituents.

5. On this basis, the committee may consider it appropriate to grant dispensations to enable them to be involved in the discussion and vote in matters affecting another local authority in Devon.
6. There are five categories of dispensation, three of which can be granted by the Standards Committee and two by the Monitoring Officer (MO). These are detailed below;
 - (a) considers that without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited [...] from participating in any particular business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business (MO),
 - (b) considers that without the dispensation the representation of different political groups on the body transacting any particular business would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of any vote relating to the business (MO),
 - (c) considers that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area (Standards),
 - (d) if it is an authority [...] operating executive arrangements, considers that without the dispensation each member of the authority's executive would be prohibited [...] from participating in any particular business to be transacted by the authority's executive (Standards), or
 - (e) considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation (Standards).
7. (a) and (b) are not relevant as the small number of members applying for dispensations will not lead to the Council becoming inquorate or the political balance being significantly affected. That leaves (c) and (e) and in light of the fact that this is likely to be the biggest local government issue affecting residents in Devon, the Committee may consider it justifiable to say that it is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area for those members to take part and therefore (c) is justified.
8. The dispensations must be for a specified term and the members have asked for them to be granted up until the next District Council elections or Local Government reorganisation (vesting date), whichever is the sooner.
9. The Committee are invited to consider the applications and decide whether or not to approve the granting of dispensations to the members outlined in the report.

Financial implications:

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

Legal implications:

The legal implications are set out in the body of the report.

Report to: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting 20 November 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release n/a



Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England consultation

Report summary:

To provide the Committee with an update on the Governments response to the "Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework" consultation exercise for local authorities.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That the Standards Committee note the update.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure the Committee are up to date regarding the Governments proposals to make changes to the Localism Act 2011.

Officer: Debbie Meakin and Melanie Wellman melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

If choosing High or Medium level outline the equality considerations here, which should include any particular adverse impact on people with protected characteristics and actions to mitigate these. Link to an equalities impact assessment form using the [equalities form template](#).

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; Click here to enter text on risk considerations relating to your report.

Links to background information Click here to enter links to background information; appendices online; and previous reports. These must link to an electronic document. Do not include any confidential or exempt information.

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

Report in full

Introduction

The [Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England consultation](#) sought views from members of the public, current and prospective local authority elected members, local government officers from all types and tiers of authorities, and local authority sector representative organisations.

The Committee considered the consultation on the 16th January 2025 and delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to respond to the consultation by the February deadline.

The proposals and 40 consultation questions were arranged under 2 principal headings as follows:

Strengthening the Standards and Conduct framework

- mandatory minimum prescribed code of conduct
- Standards Committees
- publication of allegations and investigation outcomes
- requiring completion of investigations if an elected member stands down
- empowering individuals affected by councillor misconduct to come forward

Introducing the power of suspension with related safeguards

- length of suspension
- withholding allowances and premises and facilities bans
- interim suspension
- disqualification for multiple breaches and gross misconduct
- appeals process
- potential for a national appeals body

The [Localism Act 2011](#) established the current standards and conduct framework for local authorities.

The current regime requires every local authority to adopt a code of conduct, the contents of which must, as a minimum, be consistent with the 7 '[Nolan](#)' principles of standards in public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership), and set out rules on requiring members to register and disclose pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. Beyond these requirements, it is for individual councils to set their own local code.

Every principal authority must also have in place arrangements under which it can investigate allegations of breaches of its code of conduct and must consult at least one Independent Person before coming to decisions.

There is no provision in current legislation for a sanction to suspend a councillor found to have breached the code of conduct. Sanctions for member code of conduct breaches are typically:

- barring members from cabinet, committee, or representative roles
- a requirement to issue an apology or undergo code of conduct training
- public criticism

Local authorities are also unable to withhold allowances from elected members who commit serious breaches of their code of conduct, and there is no explicit provision in legislation for authorities to impose premises bans or facilities withdrawals where they consider that it might be beneficial to do so.

The lack of meaningful sanctions, or the power to suspend elected members for serious code of conduct breaches, means local authorities have no effective way of dealing with more serious examples of member misconduct.

This government response document follows the order of the proposals as set out in the consultation document referred to above. Under each proposal there is:

- a headline summary of the responses received
- a summary of the policy considerations
- a statement of government's intended course of action in response

Introduction of a mandatory code of conduct

In response to the views expressed in the consultation, the government proposes to legislate to prescribe a mandatory code by taking a power in the primary legislation to set out the code in regulations.

This will provide the opportunity for further engagement on the detailed content of the code and provide the flexibility to review and amend in future as required. Local authorities will be able to develop their own guidance and protocols which must align with the mandatory code but will not, in themselves, be part of the code or arrangements for enforcement.

The mandatory code will include a behavioural code, the requirement for elected members and co-opted members to co-operate with code of conduct investigations, and that submitting multiple vexatious complaints would be a code of conduct breach.

Standards Committees

In response to the views expressed with regards to standards committees the government:

- proposes to legislate to require all relevant principal authorities to formally constitute a standards committee (or, as appropriate, a sub-committee convened for the purposes of considering code of conduct cases); and engage further with sector representatives to consider the specific requirements for the membership of standards committees prior to legislating on the matter
- will require, subject to relevant legal restrictions, any code of conduct investigation to be completed, and investigation findings and decisions arising be published, including when the investigation findings are 'no case to answer' and the member is exonerated, and in the event a member stands down during an investigation.

In addition, government will:

- engage with sector representative bodies and stakeholder to develop 'best practice' guidance on the handling of code of conduct complaint allegations
- retain the statutory responsibility of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected members and co-opted members on the authority and engage with sector representative organisations to consider developing guidance on what more could be done by individual authority standards committees to deliver on this responsibility

Empowering individuals affected by councillor misconduct to come forward

In response government plans to:

- legislate to provide both complainant and the respondent elected or co-opted member with a 'right for review' of standards committee investigation decisions
- set out the grounds in legislation for assessing eligibility to consider a right for review request at the local level

In addition, government will:

- include recommended actions to support those affected through the complaint and investigation process in the best practice guidance we have committed above to develop with sector representative organisations and stakeholders
- investigate with key stakeholders and sector representative organisations the case for creating an independent confidential helpline support offer for complainants

Introducing the sanction of suspension

In response, the government proposes to legislate to:

- provide authorities with a power to suspend elected members for serious code of conduct breaches for a maximum of 6 months, with the option to withhold allowances and institute premises and facilities bans where deemed appropriate
- confirm that a decision to sanction with a period of suspension, and/or institute premises and facilities bans can only be taken by a standards committee, following receipt and consideration of a formal investigation report, and following consideration of the views of the Independent Person
- the legislation will enable standards committees to have the discretion to withhold elected member allowances and ban disruptive members from using council facilities or entering property, either as standalone sanctions or in addition to suspension

Interim suspension

In response the government plans to legislate to give authorities the power to place an elected member or co-opted member on interim suspension in response only to serious code of conduct allegations subject to external investigation, from the police or other bodies within the criminal justice system, and/or where a court hearing and sentencing is awaited i.e. cases where there are legitimate safeguarding considerations, and the council is not in control of the pace and resolution of the investigation.

It also plans to legislate to confirm that the grounds to justify a standards committee taking a decision to impose interim suspension must only take place if the matter is subject to law enforcement investigation and include:

- **The seriousness of the allegations.** Meaning the allegations against the individual must be of a serious criminal nature and subject to police investigation/pending sentencing
- **Risk of Harm.** Where the nature and seriousness of the allegations is such that if the elected member were to continue in their role during the investigation, it could result in a risk of harm to either the public, the complainant, the subject member, or the authority and its reputation.

The legislation will set the maximum period of interim suspension at an initial 3 months and require ongoing review if the case remains unresolved after that initial period.

Government will engage further with sector representative bodies on the question of whether authorities should be required to publish on their website a notice of decision to place an elected member or co-opted member on interim suspension whilst investigations are ongoing and, as appropriate, a notice exonerating an elected member placed on interim suspension in the event

the external investigation results in no charges being brought or when a court decides not to uphold the charge against the subject member.

Disqualification for multiple breaches and gross misconduct

In response the government intends to introduce legislation to disqualify an elected member or co-opted member if they receive a sanction of suspension for the maximum period of 6 months twice over a 5-year period.

Appeals and a national appeals function

In response, government plans to legislate on arrangements for appeals to code of conduct decisions following further consideration of the detailed requirements to support the proposed local 'right to review' code of conduct case decisions, and the scope and scale of a national appeals function.

Next steps

The Government have indicated that the necessary legislation will only be brought forward when Parliamentary time allows.

Financial implications:

As this is an update report only, there are no financial implications directly arising.

Legal implications:

The legal implications are covered in the body of the report. To be completed by Legal.

Report to: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting 20 November 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Code of Conduct Complaint Update

Report summary:

To update the Standards Committee in relation to the Code of Conduct complaints received and/or progress made in 2025.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

(1) That the Standards Committee note the update and provide any feedback.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Committee are receiving regular updates and have sufficient oversight of Code of Conduct complaints.

Officer: Katie.Webb@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☒ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

The Code of Conduct complaints procedures apply equally to everyone. The process also ensures that anyone with a disability has the ability to make a complaint with the assistance of Council officers where needed

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Poor member behaviour brings reputational damage. It is essential that there is a robust process in place for monitoring Code of Conduct complaints by the Committee.

Links to background information None

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ Better homes and communities for all
 - ☐ A greener East Devon
 - ☒ A resilient economy
-

Report in full

1. The Committee receive regular updates on Code of Conduct complaints received by the Council in relation to District, Town and Parish Councillors.
 2. Appendix A provides an update on complaints as well a spreadsheet of enquires relating to code of conduct complaints that we have received. Appendix B sets out performance data against the timescales set out in the procedure as well as providing some helpful information and summaries on trends and patterns with the complaints. The report this time contains the full year update.
 3. Members are invited to consider the updates and data charts.
-

Financial implications:

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

Legal implications:

There are no significant legal implications directly arising from this report

Annex A

Standards Committee Annual Code of Conduct complaints update: January 2025 to November 2025

Case Ref	Parish/ Town or District?	Complainant Councillor or member of the public?	Summary of Complaint	Area of Code alleged to be Breached	Date of First Contact	Date complaint received	Date of Stage 1 Decision	Rejected at Stage 1	Stage 1 timescale met?	Date of Stage 2 Decision	Stage 2 timescale met	Decision	Reason for delay	Lessons Learnt/ Next Steps
2025/ 1	D	Member of the public	Allegation that Subject member breached the code of conduct during a speech made at a meeting	Courtesy and respect Not using position to advantage Not influencing officers	11/12/2024	24/02/2024	04/02/2025	N	N	04/06/2025	N	No further action	Christmas period, general workload and also linked complaints that came in after.	
2025/ 2	D	Member of the public	Allegation that Subject member breached the code of conduct during a speech made at a meeting	Courtesy and respect Not using position to advantage Not influencing officers	14/01/2025	30/01/2025	04/02/2025	N	N	04/06/2025	N	No further action	Christmas period, general workload and also linked complaints that came in after.	
2025/ 3	D	Member of the public	Allegation that Subject member breached the code of conduct during a speech made at a meeting	Courtesy and respect Not using position to advantage Not influencing officers	15/01/2025	24/02/2025	03/03/2025	N	Y	04/06/2025	N	No further action	Christmas period, general workload and also linked complaints that came in after.	
2025/ 4	D	Member of the public	Failing to declare an interest	Failure to declare an interest	09/02/2025	24/02/2025	03/03/2025	N	Y		N	Informal resolution - training	Exploring informal resolution and pre- election period	
2025/ 5	D	Councillor	Dispute between two councillors during and following a council meeting	Disrespect Bullying Disrepute	18/03/2025	26/03/2025	11/04/2025	N	Y	01/08/2025	N	No further action	Complex linked complaints and pre- election period	

Case Ref	Parish/ Town or District?	Complainant Councillor or member of the public?	Summary of Complaint	Area of Code alleged to be Breached	Date of First Contact	Date complaint received	Date of Stage 1 Decision	Rejected at Stage 1	Stage 1 timescale met?	Date of Stage 2 Decision	Stage 2 timescale met	Decision	Reason for delay	Lessons Learnt/ Next Steps
2025/ 6	D	Councillor	Dispute between two councillors during and following a council meeting	Disrespect Bullying Disrepute	26/03/2025	26/05/2025	11/05/2025	N	Y	01/08/2025	N	No further action	Complex linked complaints and pre- election period	
2025/ 7	T/P	Member of the public	Complaint about past issues raised that relate to the actions of the Council as a whole	Various	26/08/2025	02/09/2025	08/09/2025	Y	Y	N/A	N/ A	Rejected at stage 1		
2025/ 8	T/P	Councillor	Complaint about Councillors behaviour towards complainant	Disrespect	02/09/2025	30/09/2025	01/10/2025	N	Y					

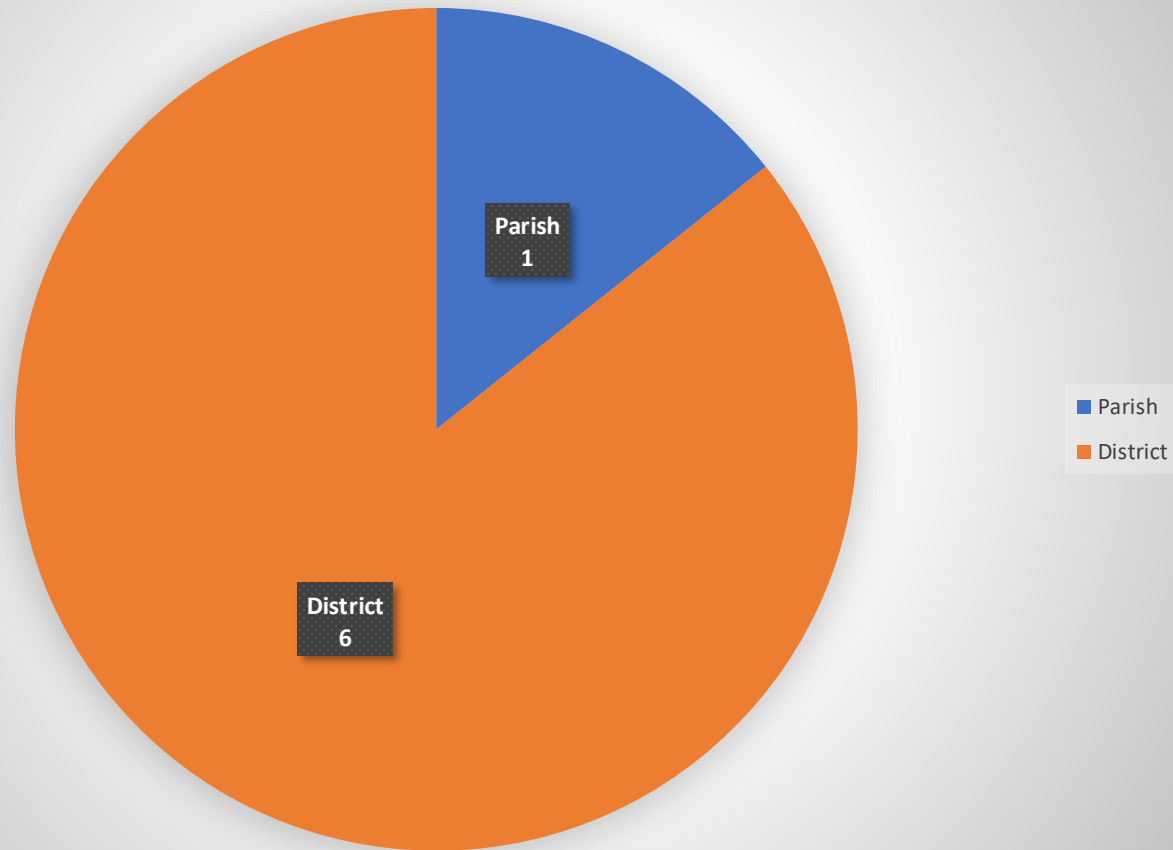
Code of Conduct Enquiries between July 2025 and November 2025

Enquiry Number	Date of Enquiry	Nature of Enquiry	Why enquiry has not progressed to CoC complaint
1	02/09/2025	Possible CoC complaint relating to parish/town councillors conduct towards a fellow councillor.	Complainant has been provided with the procedure and form and is considering options and gathering evidence to support the complaint.
2	November 2025	Possible CoC complaint relating to parish/town councillors conduct towards members of the public	Complainant advised that behaviour was carried out during members private life and therefore CofC did not apply.

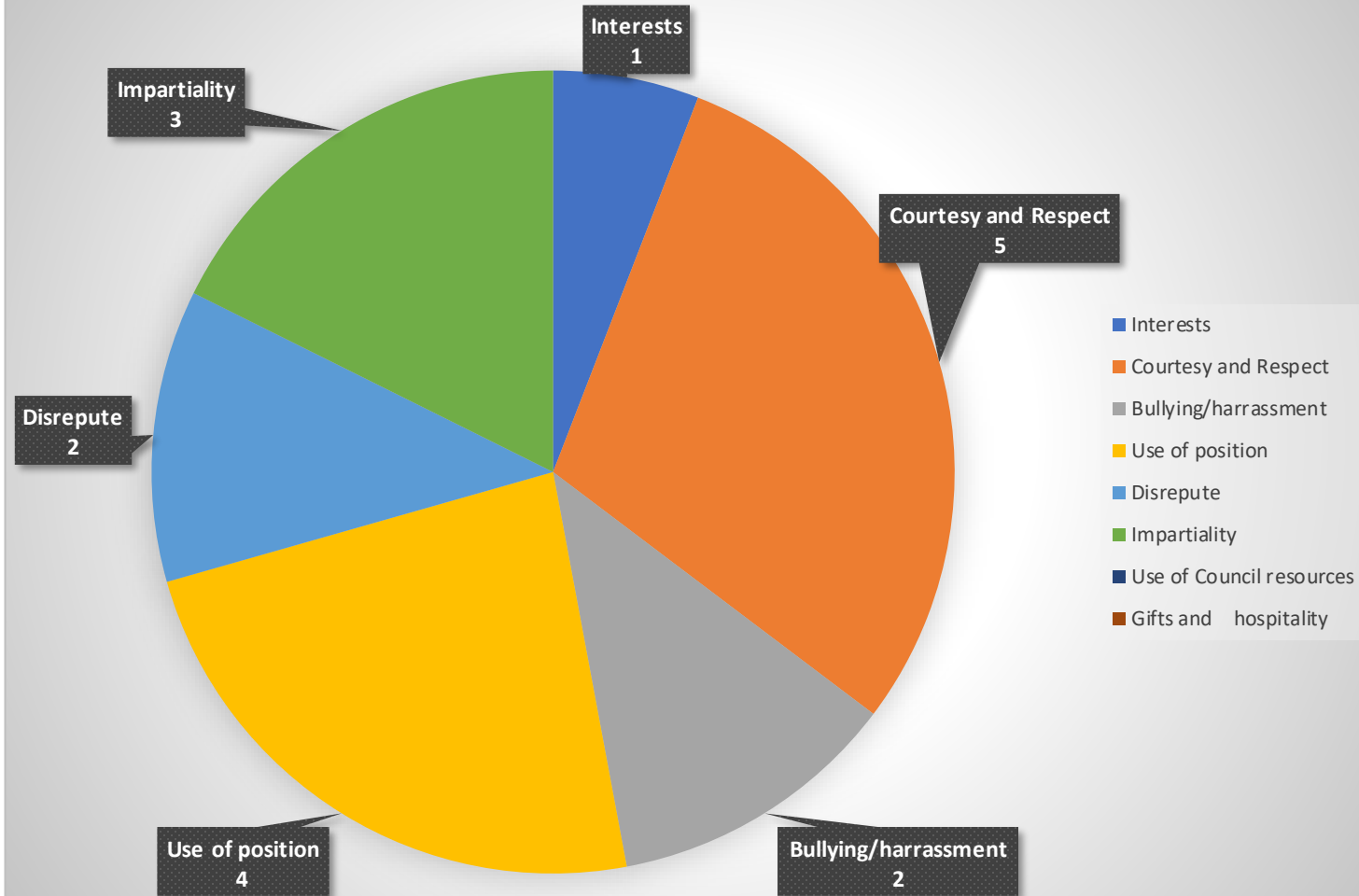
Annex B

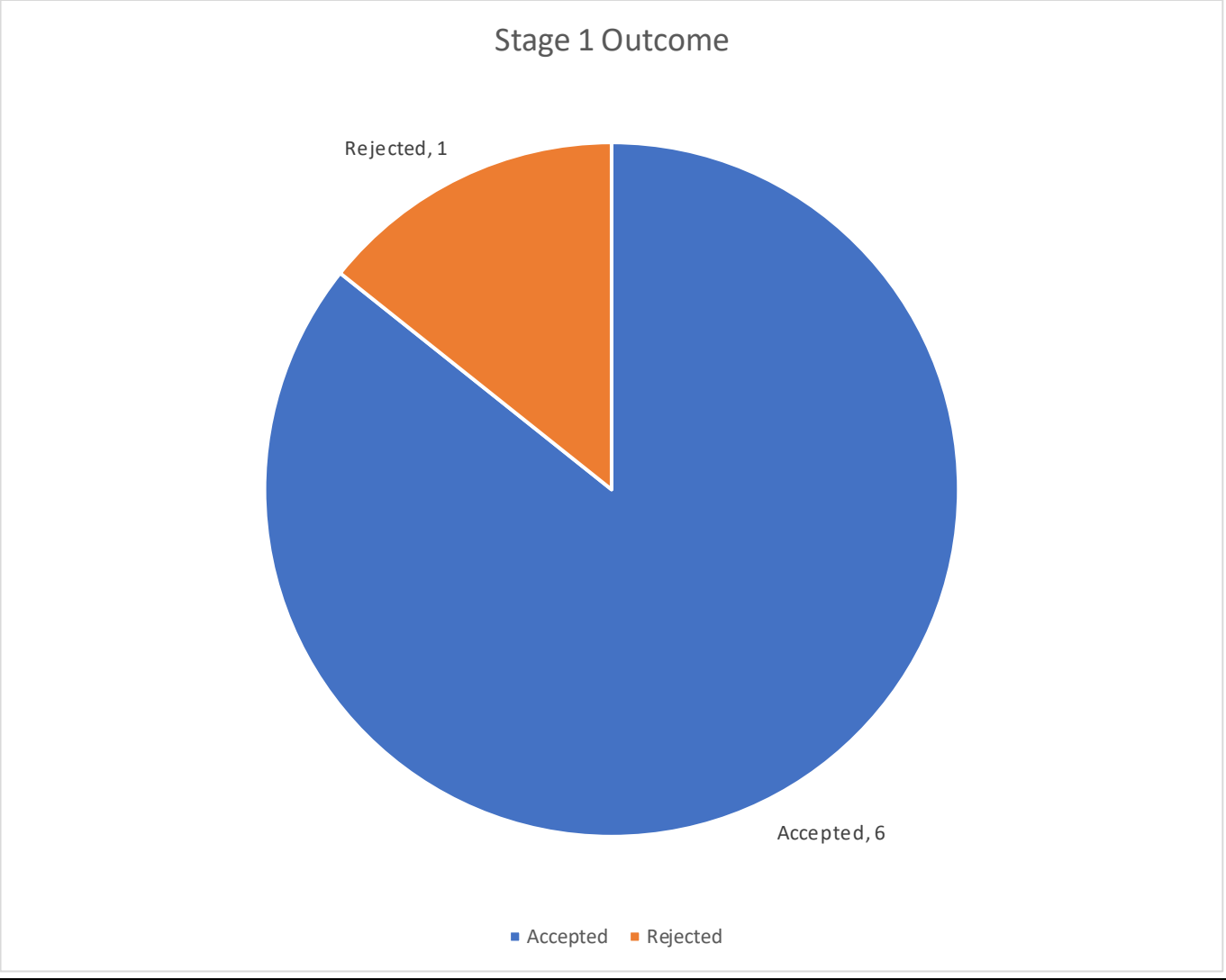
Data Charts summary of 2025 to date

Complaints Parish or District?

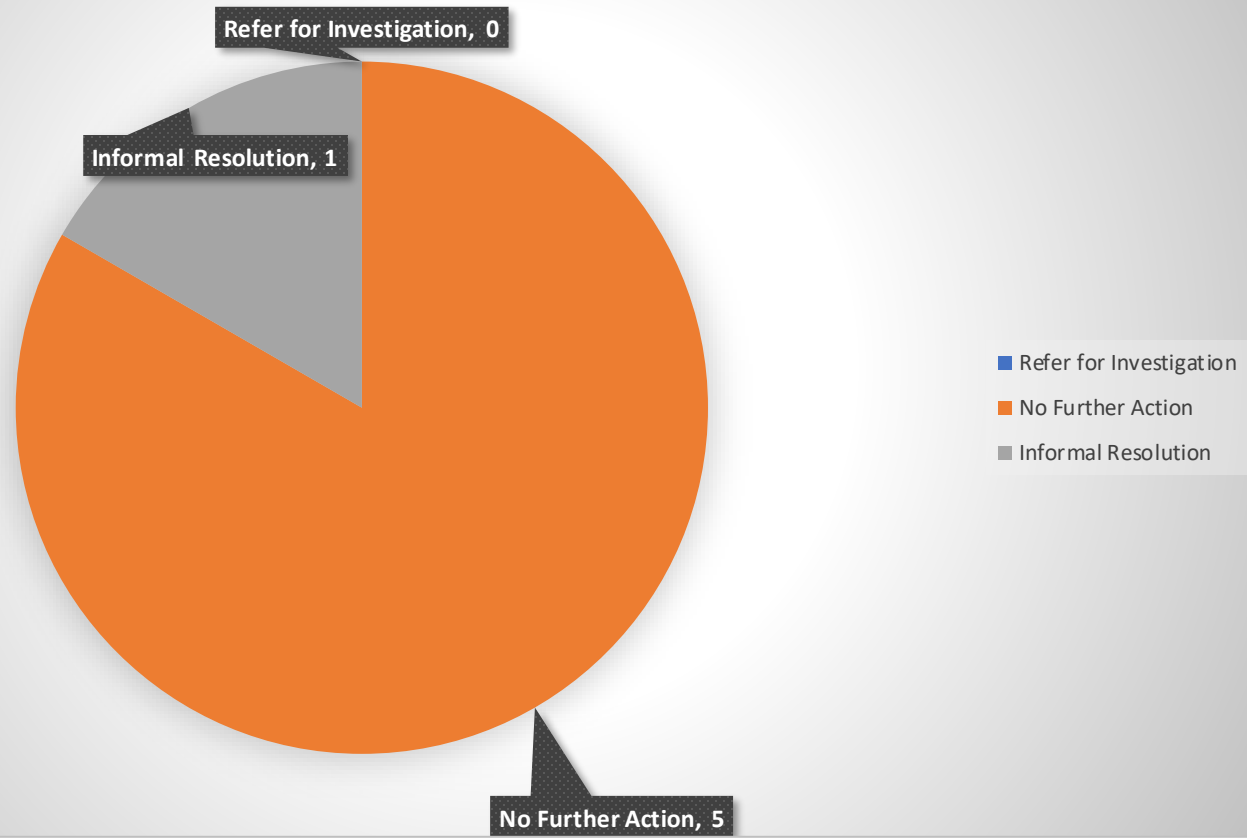


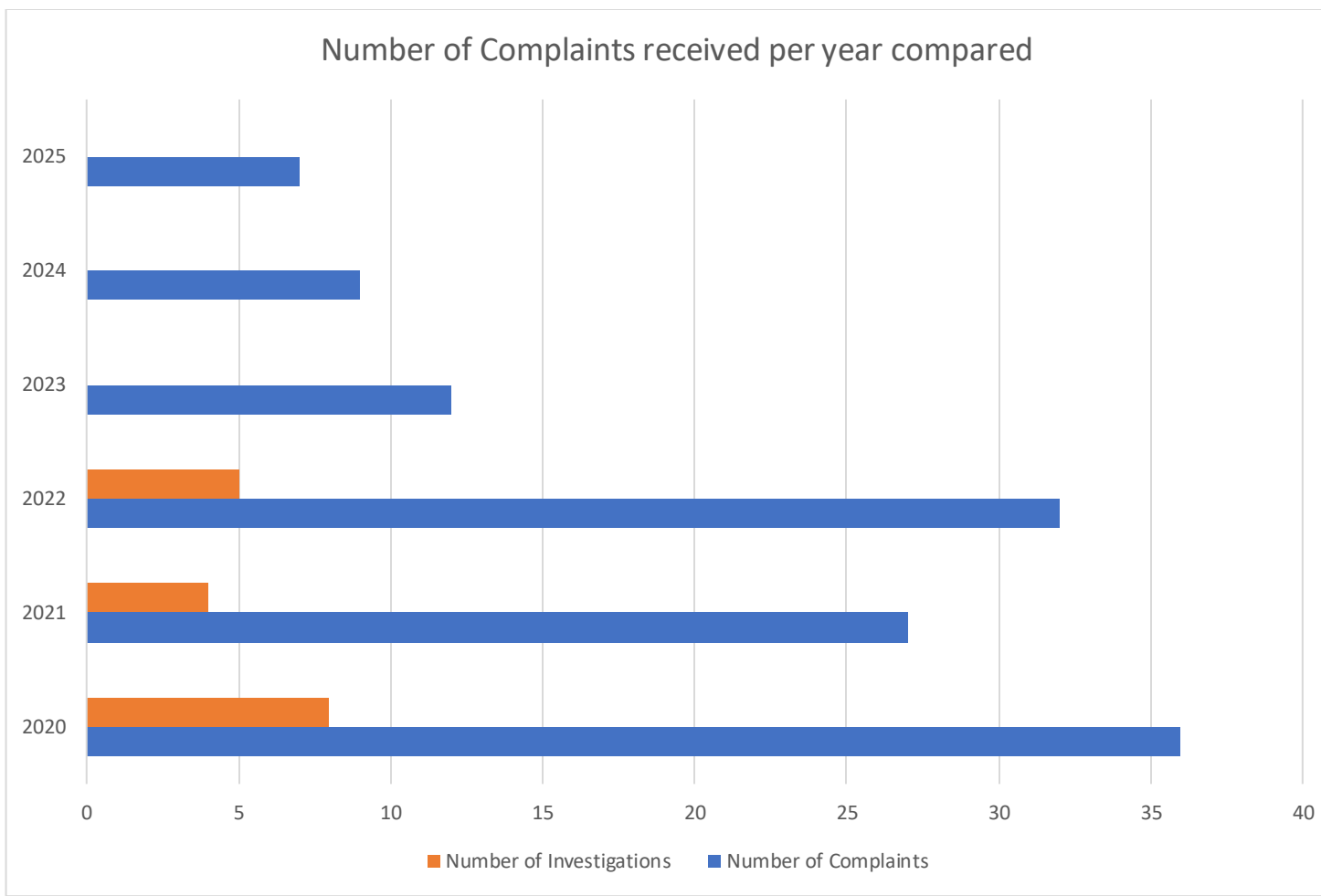
Area of Alleged Code Breach





Stage 2 Outcome





Report to: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting 20 November 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY UPDATE

Report summary:

To provide an update regarding the registration of gifts and hospitality by Members and Officers.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

(1) That the Standards Committee note the update and provide any feedback.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Committee are receiving regular updates and have sufficient oversight of Declaration of Interest procedures.

Officer: melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☒ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; By not having a formal mechanism for reviewing the relevant Gift's Register the Authority risks not discovering failings in the maintenance of it. This could lead to not only reputational damage to the Local Authority but personal action against individual Members. The Authority therefore minimises both those risks by regularly reviewing the Register to ensure that advice and guidance is provided to Members and Officers on the proper upkeep and entry on the Register.

Links to background information None

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ Better homes and communities for all
- ☐ A greener East Devon
- ☐ A resilient economy
- ☒ Quality Services

Report in full

1. The Monitoring Officer is seeking to provide a six-monthly update on the gifts and hospitality received by Members and Officers. To that end, this report provides that update for the Committees consideration, review and comment.

2. Update - Members

- a. There have been 3 declarations of gifts and hospitality recorded by Members since January 2025.
- b. As Members will be aware, under the Code adopted by the Council, Members are required to register gifts or hospitality received over £50 and any significant gifts or hospitality refused. In terms of the 3 declarations, it should be noted that all three were below the threshold for declaration.
- c. A draft Protocol for Members on the declaring of Gifts and Hospitality was recently adopted by Full Council and training on this Protocol will be provided to Members in the coming months.

3. Update – Officers

- a. There have been 2 declarations of gifts or hospitality by officers over £10 since January 2025.
- b. Under the Officer Code of Conduct officers are required to register gifts or hospitality of any value that are accepted.

4. Members are referred to Appendix A for Member declarations and Appendix B which sets out the Gifts or hospitality declared by officers.
5. To ensure that Members and Officers are aware of the need to declare gifts or hospitality, a regular six-monthly reminder is included in the staff and member newsletters.

Financial implications:

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

Legal implications:

There are no significant legal implications directly arising from this report

GIFTS & HOSPITALITY – MEMBERS

Member	Date of Receipt	Nature of Gift or Hospitality	Donor	Accepted?	Estimated Value
Cllr Fitzgerald	3/7/25	Lammas Fair annual procession and buffet lunch	Exeter City Council	Y	£25
Cllr Fitzgerald	10/7/25	Exeter Science Park Anniversary BBQ	Exeter Science Park	Y	£25
Cllr Fitzgerald	28/09/25	Budleigh Salterton Civic Service followed by tea	Budleigh Salterton Town Council	Y	£20

GIFTS & HOSPITALITY – OFFICERS

Directorate or named officer where Assistant Director or above	Date of receipt/offer	Nature of gift or hospitality	Accepted yes/no	Donor	Estimated Value
Governance	02/04/2025	Dinner	Yes	Trowers & Hamlin Solicitors LLP	£40.00
Housing	21/05/2025	Sidmouth Jazz Festival Tickets	Yes	Cllr I Barlow	£45.00