

Date of issue: Monday, 2nd October, 2023

MEETING	STANDARDS COMMITTEE (Councillors Satti (Chair), Tomar (Vice Chair), I. Ahmed, Ajaib, Dauti, Gill, Naveed and W. Sabah) CO-OPTED PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS*: Britwell Parish Council (Vacant) Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council (Cllr Naveed Rana) Wexham Court Parish Council (Cllr Mubashir Ahmed) INDEPENDENT PERSON: Raymond Tomkinson (Observer)
DATE AND TIME:	TUESDAY, 10TH OCTOBER, 2023 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NICHOLAS PONTONE 07749 709868

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



STEPHEN BROWN
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

AGENDA ITEM	REPORT TITLE	PAGE	WARD
	Apologies for absence.		
1.	Declarations of Interest	-	-

All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.

AGENDA ITEM	REPORT TITLE	PAGE	WARD
2.	Standards Committee Terms of Reference <i>To note the approved Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee</i>	1 - 2	-
3.	Minutes of the Meetings held on 19th July 2022 and 6th April 2023	3 - 8	All
4.	Meeting with the Leader of the Council and with the Chief Executive	9 - 18	All
5.	Member Survey	19 - 42	All
6.	Member Induction and Member Development Working Group	43 - 58	All
7.	Schedule of Complaints - Update	59 - 66	All
8.	Date of Next Meeting - 19th March 2024	-	-

Press and Public

Attendance and accessibility: You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

Webcasting and recording: The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

Emergency procedures: The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

** In accordance with the terms of reference, one Parish Council Member from each of the three Parish Councils within the Borough, are non-voting members on the Committee and are entitled to speak only on matters that relate to parish councils.*

ARTICLE 9A – STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Council will appoint a Standards Committee which will assist the Council to meet its duty under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members.

1. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Committee is to promote and maintain the highest ethical standards.

2. Terms of Reference

The core functions of the Committee are:

- (a) To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members (and this term includes co-opted Members)
- (b) To assist Members to observe the Council's Ethical Framework including the Code of Conduct
- (c) To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Council's Ethical Framework including the Code of Conduct
- (d) To monitor the operation of the Council's Ethical Framework including the Code of Conduct
- (e) To advise, train or arrange to train Members on matters relating to the Council's Ethical Framework including the Code of Conduct
- (f) To determine written complaints made against a Member (including a Parish Council Member) alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct and taking any action that is deemed appropriate and permitted under the Localism Act 2011 and Regulations thereunder
- (g) To exercise any of (a) to (f) above in relation to Parish Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the Members of those Parish Councils.
- (h) To keep under review and make recommendations to Council on the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.
- (i) To decide any requests from a Member or Officer for indemnity as set out in the Council's adopted policy.
- (j) To receive bi-annual reports from the Monitoring Officer on Member Conduct Complaints received since the date of the previous Ordinary Committee meeting.
- (k) To receive an annual statistical report from the Monitoring Officer on declarations of interest.

3. Determination of Member Conduct Complaints

When a meeting is convened to determine allegations that a Member (Subject Member) has breached the Code of Conduct, the Committee may make one of the following findings:

- (a) That the Subject Member has not breached the Code of Conduct;
- (b) That the Subject Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct but that no action need be taken in respect of the matters considered at the hearing; or

(c) That the Subject Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and that one or more of the following sanctions should be imposed:

- (i) Censure of the Subject Member
- (ii) Restriction for a period not exceeding six months of the Subject Member's access to the Council's premises or the Council's resources PROVIDED THAT those restrictions are a reasonable and proportionate response to the breach and do not unduly restrict the person's ability to perform the functions of a Member.
- (iii) That the Subject Member submits a written apology in a form specified by the Committee.
- (iv) That the Subject Member undertakes such training as the Committee directs.
- (v) That the Subject Member participates in such conciliation as the Committee directs.

4. Membership

The Committee will comprise:

- Seven councillors, no more than one of whom should be a member of the Executive; and none of whom should be a member of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.
- One Parish Council Member from each of the three Parish Councils within the Borough, who will be non-voting members on the Committee and entitled to speak only on matters that relate to parish councils.
- One Independent Person whose views must be sought and taken into account by the Committee when determining a complaint against a Member and before determining the appropriate sanction to impose upon a Subject Member.

The Chair of the Committee will be an elected Member of the Council.

5. Working Arrangements

Ordinary Meetings of the Committee will take place at least twice per year and the committee will consider an annual report on declarations of interest; and gifts and hospitality made by all Councillors, co-opted Members and Senior Officers of the Council, with summary reports on compliance by officers at other tiers of the organisation.

Extraordinary Meetings will be convened whenever necessary to allow the Committee to determine allegations that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct.

For Ordinary Meetings the quorum of the Committee shall be a minimum of three elected Members of the Council. For Extraordinary Meetings the quorum of the Committee shall be a minimum of three elected Members of the Council .

Standards Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th July, 2022.

Present:-

Elected Members:-

Councillors Mann (Chair), Sabah (Vice-Chair), P. Bedi, Minhas and Mohammad

Parish Councillor Representative:-

Parish Councillor Kevin Barry (Britwell)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors S. Malik and S. Parmar.
Raymond Tomkinson (Independent Person, Observer)

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

2. Councillors' Code of Conduct and Standards Committee terms of reference

The Monitoring Officer introduced a report that set out the terms of reference for the newly formed Standards Committee. Members were asked to agree to recommend minor changes to the terms of reference to Council to remove the requirement for independent members and to the procedure for determining complaints to reflect the role of the new committee. The proposed changes were detailed in Appendix 1 and 3 to the report.

It was noted that with effect from the municipal year 2022/23 a separate Standards Committee had been established to assist the Council to meet its duty under s.27 of the Localism Act 2011. Previously the functions had been the responsibility of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee. The new structure had been implemented at the suggestion of the DLUHC Commissioners. The core functions of the Committee, proposed changes and working arrangements were outlined.

In relation to the proposed removal of the requirement for independent members on the committee it was noted that it was good practice for audit committees to have co-opted membership of this kind, but it was not considered to be required for standards which already had independent input from the Independent Person and from parish council co-optees on relevant issues. Parish Council representatives were non-voting members of the Standards Committee. The Committee supported the proposed change and agreed to recommend the revised terms of reference to Council.

A Member asked about the reasoning why there could not be any cross-membership between the standards committee and audit & corporate governance committee. It was responded that good practice from other authorities could be explored and the matter could be considered in future reviews of the terms of reference.

A summary of complaints received about borough and parish councillors under the Code of Conduct to date in 2022/23 was reviewed. Members asked a number of questions about specific cases which the Monitoring Officer responded to as far as possible without disclosing any confidential aspects of the cases. It was noted that all of the four complaints received during 2022/23 had been either determined or closed with none requiring any formal investigation. The update was noted.

Recommended to Council -

- a) That the Constitution's Article 9A and Part 5.1 Councillors' Code of Conduct be amended as set out in Appendices 1 and 3 to the report.

Resolved -

- b) That the outcome of complaints determined to date in 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be noted.

3. Whistleblowing annual report

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report which provided Members with an annual update in relation to the Council's whistleblowing arrangements.

The provision of an annual report to the committee increased the profile of whistleblowing across the Council and provided an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and requirements for improvement. Members agreed that an annual report on whistleblowing be provided to the committee by the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee were reminded that in response to an internal audit report, the Whistleblowing Code was reviewed by Audit and Corporate Governance Committee in July 2021. The Code had been amended in response to recommendations in the internal audit report and it was agreed that the Code should be formally reviewed annually. The current code had been reviewed against the requirements of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy's guidance and it was considered that the Council's code was compliant. Minor changes to the Confidential Whistleblowing Code were proposed, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and the Committee agreed that they should be recommended to Council for approval.

In 2021/22 the Council's internal auditors, RSM, conducted a review of the Council's whistleblowing arrangements which included a survey of staff, although the response rate had been very low with only 35 responses. The results indicated that nearly half of those respondents had either not been

informed about or knew where to find the whistleblowing code, the majority did not understand the procedure and a significant proportion did not feel that the culture of the organisation encouraged whistleblowing where necessary or were confident that a concern would be handled appropriately.

Members noted that the 2021 governance review of the Council did not specifically refer to whistleblowing as a concern, it did raise significant concerns about the culture and leadership, including the lack of an annual governance statement for 2020/21 or an action plan for the previous statement. It was noted that whilst an effective whistleblowing code and associated procedures were important they were part of a much wider system to ensure ethical practices were understood and complied with and that the Council was a learning organisation, seeking continuous improvement and encouraging staff to raise concerns. The Monitoring Officer stated that the Council's corporate plan had raised leadership and culture and governance as two of its seven recovery themes.

Members asked about the number of whistleblowing complaints received in the past year. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that none had been received. A small number of concerns raised by individuals had been termed whistleblowing at the point they had been submitted, but on examination did not fall under the definition of whistleblowing as set out in the code. It was recognised for example that some 'whistleblowing' concerns raised were often in fact grievances which would be dealt with under the relevant policy.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee agreed that the changes to the whistleblowing code be recommended to full Council for approval.

Resolved -

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the minor changes to the Confidential Whistleblowing Code as set out in Appendix 2 be agreed and recommended to full Council for approval.
- (c) That the Committee receive an annual report on whistleblowing.

4. Annual Update on Members' Register of Interests and Gifts & Hospitality

The Democratic Services Lead introduced a report which provided the first annual on the Members' register of interest and declarations of gifts & hospitality for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 required that the Monitoring Officer establish and maintain a register of interest for Members of the authority, to ensure that the authority, public and any other interested parties know of any interests a councillor may have that might give rise to a conflict of interest. The Councillors' Code of Conduct in Part 5.1 of the Constitution set out the relevant interests that should be declared and disclosed in both the register

and at meetings. It was highlighted that Members were personally responsible for registering and declaring their interests.

The current procedure for registration of interest forms was outlined and activity in relation to the register and declarations at meetings since the start of the 2021/22 municipal year was summarised. Members were informed that following a review of the processes, areas for improvement had been identified as maintaining accuracy, compliance and ensuring declarations relating to outside bodies were up to date.

Members were reminded that the Council had also strengthened its transparency process relating to Gifts and Hospitality and that from June 2021 all registrations by Members had been published on each councillor's webpage. Older declarations were maintained in a file held by democratic services and available for public inspection on request.

Since the start of the 21/22 municipal year no declarations were made for the receipt of gifts or hospitality over an estimated value of £50. However, the Council was not complacent about the relatively low levels of declarations of gifts and hospitality and Members would be regularly reminded of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct to declare any such matters.

Members of the committee asked about the report on councillors performance which usually came to committee and it was responded that this matter remained in the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee's remit.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

5. Update on Government's Response to Committee on Standards in Public Life

The Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with an update on the Government's response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life report and recommendations arising from its review of Local Government Ethical Standards and explained how these recommendations would apply in the local context of Slough. The update was noted.

Resolved - That the update and the Council's local procedures be noted.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 2 February 2023.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.58 pm)

Standards Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 6th April, 2023.

Present:-

Elected Members:-

Councillor W. Sabah (Vice-Chair)

Parish Councillor Representative:-

None.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Mann, P. Bedi and S. Parmar

PART 1

The meeting was not quorate, therefore business would be deferred to the next meeting. Informal consultation with Members would take place on the Member Development Programme to be delivered following the Borough Elections in May 2023.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 6.31 pm)

This page is intentionally left blank

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Standards Committee
Date:	10 October 2023
Subject:	Meeting with the Leader of the Council and with the Chief Executive
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Ward(s):	ALL
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to afford the Standards Committee an opportunity to discuss with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity, particularly the Authority's approach to ethical governance and its key priorities in ensuring that high ethical standards continue to be promoted and maintained within the Council.

Recommendations:

Committee is recommended to:

- a) Welcome this opportunity for discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, and
- b) Recommend any actions that the Committee feels would support continued improvement in the Council's approach to ethical governance.

Commissioner Review

Commissioners have noted this report.

2. Report

- 2.1 The purpose of the Standards Committee as set out in Article 9A of the Council's Constitution is "*to promote and maintain the highest ethical standards.*" This is in order to enable the Council to comply with section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 which requires the council to "*promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority.*"
- 2.2 The Committee also has a number of core functions including assisting members to observe the Council's Ethical Framework and the Code of Conduct, advising and training members on matters relating to the ethical framework, and monitoring its operation.

- 2.3 Parishes within the Borough also have the same statutory obligation in relation to their own members, and the Committee also assists parishes within the Borough in their duty to comply with it.
- 2.4 The purpose of the Committee meeting with the Leader of the Council and with the Chief Executive is to seek their perspective as to how the Ethical Framework, as set out in the Council's Constitution, is working in practice in relation to both members and officers. Further, it also offers them the opportunity to suggest areas on which the Standards Committee could focus in order to promote and maintain ethical standards whether it be in relation to the culture of the authority or ensuring that necessary elements of the ethical framework are in place.
- 2.5 The Committee can then consider whether any suggestions put forward should be included in a future work programme of the Committee.
- 2.6 As background to this discussion, an Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 1. The Ethical Audit has looked at the various elements of the Council's ethical framework and sets out the current situation with a view to the Committee being able to identify any particular areas for review and/or action to be taken in a future work programme.

Options considered

It is open to the Committee not to invite the Leader of the Council or the Chief Executive to meet with them.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

No specific financial implications have been identified as arising from this report.

3.2 Legal implications

The Council has a duty under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority. Meeting with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive will help inform the Standards Committee as to any current or emerging issues which may need to be addressed.

3.3 Risk management implications

No risk management implications have been identified as arising from this report. Any risk management issues which may arise during discussion of this report will be addressed in any future report.

3.4 Environmental implications

No environmental implications have been identified as arising from this report.

3.5 Equality implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been completed for this report as it does not recommend a change in Council policy or service.

4. Background Papers

None

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix - Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis
Matrix of Key Information held by Slough Borough Council
September 2023

	Key Information	Held	Current position	Area of review or action to be identified by the Standards Committee
1	Constitution/ Current Decision-Making Framework	Yes	The constitution is reviewed at least annually and a full report was presented to the Annual Meeting of Council on 18 th May 2023 which approved extensive amendments to the constitution including changes in the Overview and Scrutiny process. The constitution is also being reviewed as necessary during the year and this is currently being carried out in stages having regard to available resources. The most recent changes were to the Planning Committee procedures and Planning Code of Conduct which were approved by Council at its July 2023 meeting. A report on the terms of reference of the Health & Wellbeing Board is being considered by Council at its September 2023 meeting. The constitution's operation is monitored by the Council's Monitoring Officer whose recommendations feed into the review process. The Member Panel of the Constitution enables member oversight of any changes being proposed to Council.	
2	Council Procedure Rules <i>(Part 4.1 of the Constitution)</i>	Yes	These Rules were last updated May 2021.	
3	Contract Procedure Rules <i>(Part 4.6.1 of the Constitution)</i>	Yes	These Rules were last updated November 2022.	
4	Employees Code of Conduct	Yes	This Code was last updated May 2021.	

Appendix - Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis
Matrix of Key Information held by Slough Borough Council
September 2023

	<i>(Part 5.3 of the Constitution)</i>		<p>The Employees Code of Conduct is referred to in the contract of employment of all staff. The Code meets the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life.</p> <p>The Employee Code of Conduct is intended to promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest standards in public life • Harmonious working relationships • The Council's values and priorities <p>It is planned to review the Employees Code of Conduct during 2023/24.</p>	
5	Councillors Code of Conduct <i>(Part 5.1 of the Constitution)</i>	Yes	<p>The updated Councillors Code of Conduct was approved at the Annual Council on 20th May 2021, under the Localism Act 2011 and the Complaints Process was last updated at the July 2022 Council meeting.</p> <p>The Councillors Code was last reviewed in May 2023 during the Constitution review of 2023, which included the Code. However, it was deemed that the Code was still up to date, and no changes were required. The Monitoring Officer conducts regular reviews of the Code, typically annually, but more frequently if needed to align with best practices.</p> <p>Members Code of Conduct training is provided annually. The Monitoring Officer has offered guidance and training on the Member's Code of Conduct to Officers and Members, as well as to parish Clerks and Parish Councillors. Refresher training is also provided regularly.</p> <p>An initial session for all members elected following the all-out election in May 2023 was delivered by the Monitoring Officer at the Member's welcome evening on Thursday, 11th May 2023. A workshop session on the Code of Conduct and the Member and</p>	

Appendix - Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis
Matrix of Key Information held by Slough Borough Council
September 2023

			Officer Relations Code (see no. 6 below) was subsequently held by the Monitoring Officer on Thursday, 8th June 2023.	
6	Member and Officer Relations Code (Part 5.4 of the Constitution)	Yes	The Code has been in place for some time and it is planned to review it during 2023/24. It is in line with such Codes elsewhere and the Monitoring Officer is not aware of any local issues with the Code that are outstanding.	
7	Confidential Whistleblowing Code (Part 5.5 of the Constitution)	Yes	The Confidential Whistleblowing Code is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the council rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. The Code was last updated in July 2022.	
8	Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee (Article 9A of the Constitution)	Yes	Prior to 2022, the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee was also responsible for Ethical Standards. In consequence of a Direction from the Secretary of State to revise the terms of reference of that Committee, a separate Standards Committee was established in January 2022 to focus on upholding high standards of conduct among members and co-opted members.	
9	Scheme of Delegation (Part 3.6 of the Constitution)	Yes	This was last reviewed by Annual Council in May 2023 and minor changes were made to the scheme of delegation.	
10	Members Register of Interests	Yes	The Register is a public document and accessible on the Council's website. Regular reminders are issued through the Members' Weekly Bulletin approximately every 6-8 weeks. In accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, the Council also now publishes Register of Interest forms for all the Parish Councillors in the Borough Area.	

Appendix - Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis
Matrix of Key Information held by Slough Borough Council
September 2023

11	Recorded Declaration of Interests	Yes	Interests are recorded at meetings and are recorded on the website.	
12	Members Induction Process	Yes	<p>All new Councillors are provided with a comprehensive induction programme in relation to the ethical framework and the decision-making process, as well as service specific issues. Attendance at the induction programme is monitored to ensure all new members are properly inducted.</p> <p>Any new Councillors elected in by-elections attend induction training following their election.</p> <p>The induction programme is also supplemented by the Members' Handbook designed to be a resource for Members throughout their term of office. It contains a wide range of useful and practical information regarding their roles and responsibilities, the Council's operation, its vision and priorities and support available for Members.</p>	
13	Officers Induction Process	Yes	<p>A corporate induction process is in place and departmental induction processes are also in place.</p> <p>The Officers' induction process includes guidance on ethics and standards of behaviour. Staff members are set up on the Agresso System during their induction, with line managers receiving an induction checklist as a reminder to guide their new hires. All new staff are informed about the monthly corporate induction event through Agresso.</p> <p>During the corporate induction event, it is verified whether staff have received a copy of the code of conduct, and they are reminded of their responsibility to read it and discuss any concerns with their line managers.</p> <p>The onboarding process is currently being reviewed.</p>	

Appendix - Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis
Matrix of Key Information held by Slough Borough Council
September 2023

14	Members Continuing Development and Training	Yes	<p>The Member Development Programme is currently led by the Standards Committee. The Member Development Programme for 2023/24 was prepared for the Standards Committee meeting in April. As the meeting was not quorate, the Monitoring Officer finalised the programme in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee and a cross party group of members. The Council and third parties offer various development and training opportunities, and attendance records are maintained.</p> <p>Members may wish to explore the use of a skills audit to identify any training needs of individual members which are supported by the Group Leader.</p>	
15	Officers Continuing Development	Yes	<p>The Council utilises the following mechanisms to support officers continuous development –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation meetings • Performance management appraisals • 1:1 meeting held every 4-6 weeks • Cornerstone Learning Management System • A weekly ‘bitesize leadership learning’ programme 	
16	Officers Training	Yes	<p>The Council has launched an online talent management system ‘Cornerstone’ that keeps the staff continuing professional development and learning in one place. It includes mandatory E-learning modules as well as a number of useful resources to support staff. Information about available courses is accessed via <u>Cornerstone</u>. Bespoke training in relation to the job role is discussed with line managers as appropriate.</p>	

Appendix - Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis
Matrix of Key Information held by Slough Borough Council
September 2023

17	Other Council Specific Additional Code and Protocols within the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee	<p><u>Monitoring Officer Protocol (5.6)</u> - last reviewed and updated in May 2021.</p> <p><u>Planning Code of Conduct (5.2)</u> – reviewed by Council in July 2023. this Code provides guidance for everyone involved in the council's statutory planning duties. It applies to elected members, officers, potential developers, and the public, setting clear ethical standards expected from the council during planning functions.</p>	
----	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

Stephen P Taylor
Monitoring Officer
26 September 2023

Slough Borough Council

Report to:	Standards Committee
Date:	10 th October 2023
Subject:	Member Survey
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	<u>Appendix A</u> – survey responses Jan-Feb 2023

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report:

- is an update of the report published for an inquorate meeting of the Standards Committee in April 2023
- Introduces the Standards Committee to the idea of an annual survey of councillors;
- Reports the results of the first such survey which took place in the final quarter of the previous council; and
- invites councillors' views on the survey questions related to member conduct before the survey is updated and re-issued in October 2023.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the results of the previous Member Survey be noted; and**
- 2. That the committee provides feedback on the survey questions related to member conduct, to inform the October 2023 issue of the survey.**

Reason:

The Standards Committee's terms of reference include to 'monitor the operation of the council's ethical framework including the code of conduct' and to advise the council based on its findings. The member survey provides an important source of information about members' perceptions and opinions, including about the conduct of members and other aspects of the committee's terms of reference.

Commissioners Comments

Commissioners have noted this report.

Introduction

- 2.1 A report on this topic was published for the Standards Committee in April 2023. However, the April meeting was not quorate so it was not formally considered. The report has therefore been updated for today's meeting.
- 2.2 Although the committee did not meet formally in April, an informal member working group was convened later from Standards Committee members which did review the results. Among other things they used this information to provide input into the 2023 Member Development Programme.

Introduction

- 2.3 At the request of the Secretary of State, in the form of directions issued to Slough Borough Council, a series of 'improvement plans' have been created and published. Progress against these plans is being monitored by government-appointed commissioners.
- 2.4 A number of these plans will benefit from data about councillors' skills, attitudes, motivations and concerns. These include the Democratic Governance Action Plan and Scrutiny Action Plan, as well as a Culture Change Plan.
- 2.5 It is in any event good practice for local authorities to survey their councillors periodically and to use the results to ensure that services and support for councillors are designed to meet their specific needs. At a national level the Local Government Association carries out a 'census' of councillors for similar reasons.
- 2.6 An action to complete such a survey was included in the Democratic Governance Action Plan. A further action to embed this as annual practice is also included.

Method

- 2.7 An online survey was launched to councillors using Microsoft Forms during January-February 2023. Group leaders agreed the content and furthermore agreed to encourage their membership to complete the survey. It was:
 - Sent to each councillor individually on Microsoft Teams once.
 - Sent to each councillor individually by email twice.
 - Sent to all councillors in the Member Newsletter (multiple times)
 - Available via QR code on posters outside the meeting chamber at Observatory House
- 2.8 Results were recorded anonymously.
- 2.9 The survey was designed to include a number of questions from the National Councillor Census conducted by the Local Government Association, allowing a degree of national benchmarking.
- 2.10 The survey is a little bit longer than would be ideal. While completion time was estimated at 30 minutes, the average time to complete it was 47 minutes. However, this is the first survey of its type in recent years at Slough Borough Council, so its value is high and very few councillors dropped out before the end.

Response

- 2.11 24 out of 42 councillors responded, a response rate of 57%. This is considered good for a survey of this type, especially towards the end of an administration when some members may not be intending to stand for election again.
- 2.12 The results of the questions, including a full account of the free text responses - and comparisons, where available, with the LGA councillor survey - are presented at Appendix A.
- 2.13 Any potentially identifying personal comments have been redacted, otherwise the free text comments are presented in their original and full form)

Response to the Survey

- 2.14 These results should primarily be viewed as a baseline whose value will grow when we do repeat surveys. The intention was, and still is, to survey the new incoming cohort of Members in October 2023 using substantially the same questions, to provide a comparison with the old cohort and a baseline for the new four-year municipal cycle, and then annually thereafter.
- 2.15 Various statistics in this survey should provide the basis for measurement of the council's performance in terms of support provided to members (eg Members' satisfaction with Democratic Services, IT, officer responsiveness etc) and in terms of their perception of the council's performance at supporting residents (eg the figures about responsiveness to service requests and complaints). Crucially, a number of statistics will provide insights into the intended improvement of the leadership culture at Slough Borough Council, especially as it relates to the relationship between senior officers and members.
- 2.16 Members of the Standards Committee were to be invited, in April 2023, to provide officers with their views on the key results and a steer as to how they would like to see the council respond to the data. Although that meeting did not go ahead, officers used the data in a number of ways, including:
- The Corporate Governance Working Group (an officer board chaired by the Monitoring Officer which acts as the project board for the Democratic Governance Project and the Scrutiny Improvement Project) reviewed the data for actions to add to the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Action Plans.
 - The Culture Change Programme Board (an officer board chaired by the Executive Director for Strategy and Improvement which is overseeing the council-wide culture change programme) reviewed the data for actions to add to the culture change action plans.
 - The plan for member development and induction (found elsewhere on today's agenda) took into account the wealth of feedback from councillors in the survey about their development needs, assisted by the contribution of an informal Member Development Working Group convened in April 2023 for that purpose.
 - Some survey data was shared with scrutiny members at the annual review workshop in early March 2023 and is included in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 which was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2023 and Full Council on 28 March 2023.

- The survey results relating to members' use of IT and their training needs informed work on refreshing the IT offer for all councillors in May 2023 in time for the new cohort of councillors.
- The full extended leadership team of the council discussed the survey results and how the organisation should respond, at an 'extended CLT' meeting.
- The full set of results were sent to the top 4 tiers of the organisation for review at Directorate Leadership Team meetings for potential lessons to learn in each service area.

Next Steps

- 2.17 In May 2023, twenty-two new councillors joined the council (out of forty-two) and the political administration changed. It is impossible to know how many of the 20 councillors who remain from the previous cohort were amongst the 24 who responded to the survey, and how radically their responses would differ now given the major changes since that time.
- 2.18 Therefore, the applicability of the results in Appendix A to the current council cannot be assumed. However, the exercise of comparing these survey results with future results will not be fruitless as long as it is done carefully in this informed context. Some subjects covered by the survey – such as councillors' perceptions of the quality of the member support offer and of officers' behaviours – may be easier to meaningfully compare than others.
- 2.19 The next survey will launch in October 2023 following review of the content by the Group Leaders.
- 2.20 The content of the October 2023 survey will be based on the previous survey. As far as possible, there is a benefit to keeping questions identical so as to allow direct comparison over time.
- 2.21 However, as noted above, there may be a benefit in shortening the survey. This will be attempted as far as possible while taking into account developments in the council's current situation, which may also lead to new questions being developed.
- 2.22 As before, the survey questions will be finalised with the input of political group leaders. However, the Standards Committee's views are welcomed first, particularly in regard to any member conduct-related questions, to help shape any changes to the survey before it is re-issued.
- 2.23 The results of some of the survey questions will provide this committee with some insights relating to part of its terms of reference, namely to 'monitor the operation of the council's ethical framework including the code of conduct' and to 'advise' the council based on its findings.
- 2.24 Data from the October survey will be reported to Members in informal and formal settings, giving an opportunity to develop productive actions which contribute to the council's continued improvement.

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 There are no specific financial implications.

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 There are no specific legal implications to be noted.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 Failure to take proper account of the information provided could hinder the council's improvement efforts and/or make it harder to demonstrate improvement to the government-appointed commissioners.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 This survey provides some insight into the demography and family circumstances of councillors, in addition to information about the degree to which members have experienced bullying and/or harassment. When reviewing this information the Council must take into account its equalities duties.

4. Background Papers

None.

5. Appendices

Appendix A – Survey responses (Jan-Feb 2023)

This page is intentionally left blank

Member Survey Autumn 2022 – Full responses

This is 'appendix A' to the [April 2023](#) Standards Committee report on Member Survey Results.

For presentational reasons, responses are not listed in survey order, however they are numbered in survey order.

Twenty-four members responded, out of 42 councillors (57%).

WHAT COUNCILLORS DO

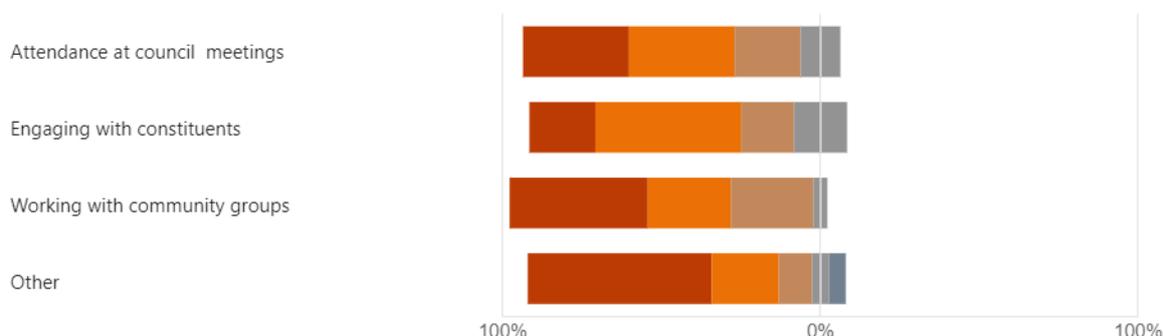
33. What position(s) do you hold at SBC?

- Cabinet/executive member 5
- Chair/vice chair of any formal co... 9
- Scrutiny member 10
- Committee member (excluding ... 11
- SBC rep on other body (eg com... 3

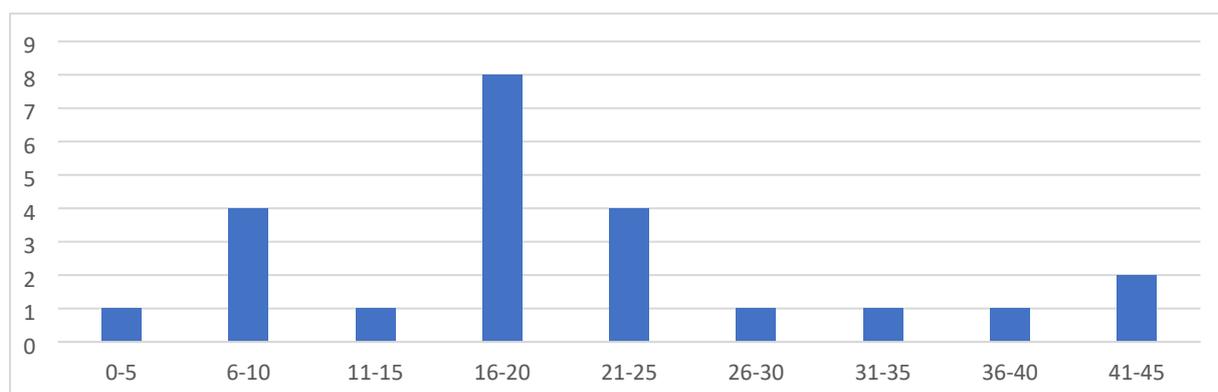


34. Roughly how many hours do you spend on the following council business in an average week?

- 0-5 hrs
- 6-10 hrs
- 11-15 hrs
- 16-20 hrs
- 21-25 hrs
- 26-30 hrs
- 31+ hrs



35. Roughly how many hours in total do you spend on your councillor role in an average week?



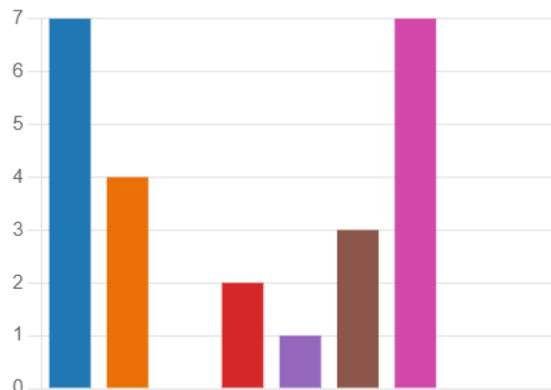
Appendix A

The average time spent by SBC councillors on their councillor role in an average week was 21.7 hours.

For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 was 22.4 hours.

36. What are your current circumstances? (select one)

● In full-time paid employment	7
● In part-time paid employment	4
● Not in paid work - in full-time e...	0
● Not in paid work - looking after ...	2
● Not in paid work - other reason	1
● Retired	3
● Self-employed or freelance	7
● Unemployed	0
● Other	0

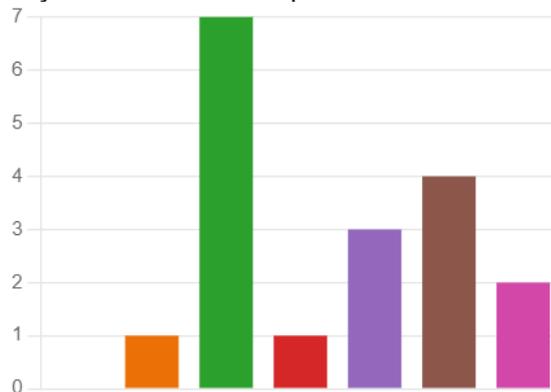


For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, 40.0 per cent of councillors were retired (SBC's figure is 12.5%). The proportion in full-time employment was 20.3 per cent (SBC's figure is 29.1%).

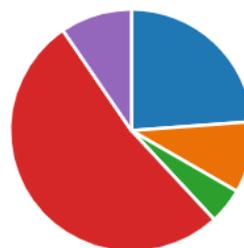
37. If you are in paid employment, what is your current occupation?

● Administrative, clerical, secretari...	0
● Lecturer, teacher or researcher	1
● Managerial or executive	7
● Manual or craft	1
● Professional or technical	3
● N/A (not in paid employment)	4
● Other	2



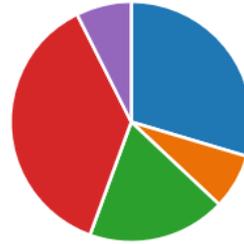
38. Do you hold additional democratic/voluntary/unpaid positions?

● Parish councillor	5
● School governor	2
● Magistrate	1
● No such positions	11
● Other	2



39. Do you have any caring responsibilities (as a primary carer)? (select any which apply) (optional)

● Child(ren)	8
● Partner	2
● Relative	5
● None	10
● Other	2



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, more than two-fifths of councillors (45.9 per cent) had responsibility as a carer, higher for women (50.6 per cent) than men (38.9 per cent). Most commonly councillors cared for a child or children (19.7 per cent, 25.5 per cent of women and 17.1 per cent of men). Most of the rest cared for a relative (11.1 per cent) or partner (9.8 per cent). The overall proportion with a caring responsibility had previously ranged between 24.2 per cent and 27.9 per cent between 2004 and 2013, before increasing in 2018 and 2022.

40. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

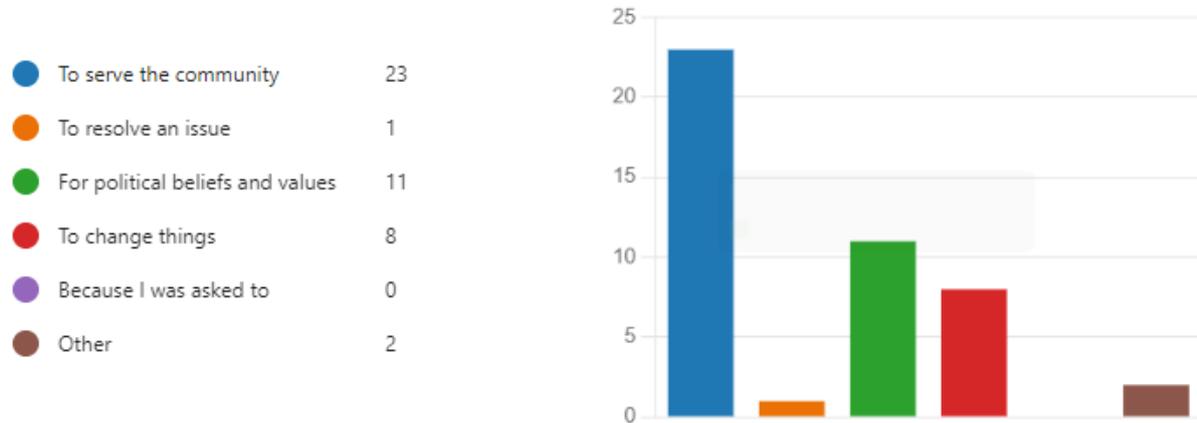
Trustee

I am loosing lot of time in dealing with caseworks & follow up/chasing officers. If systems & procedures are working well then there will be less caseworks and less chaseups but that is not the case. Senior officers do not even respond to councillor emails. Member Casework team is only a mediator but what can they do if officers are not acting.

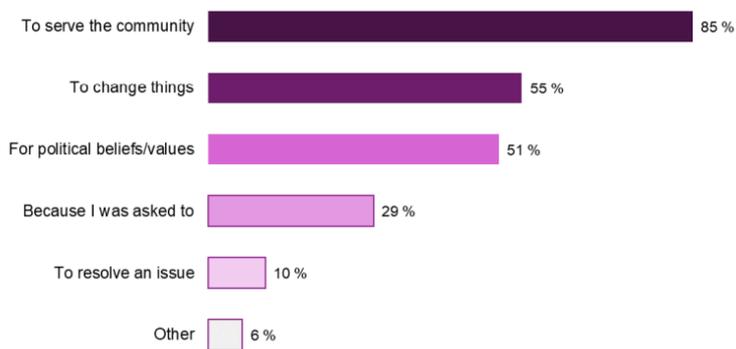
I am a grandparent

COUNCILLORS' MOTIVATIONS AND ATTITUDES TO THE ROLE

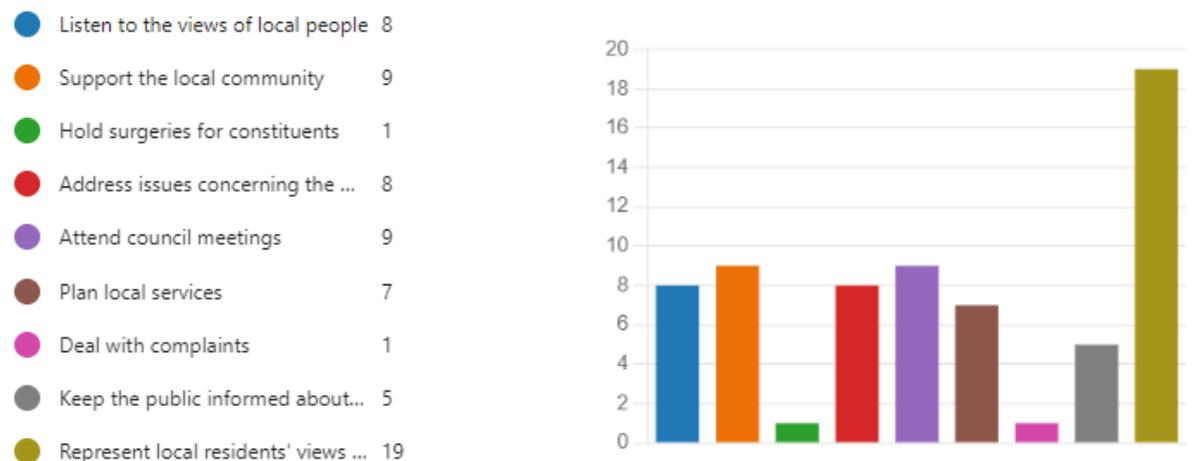
1. What were your main reasons for becoming a councillor?
(Options from LGA's councillor census)



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

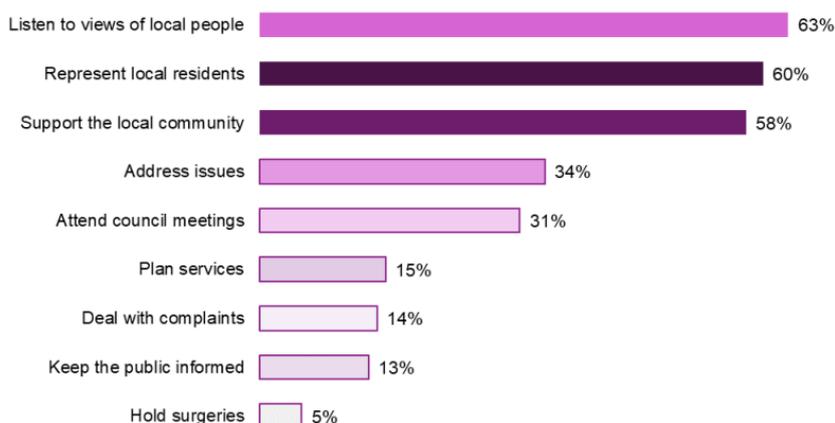


2. In your view, which are the most important things that councillors do?
(Options from LGA's councillor census)



Appendix A

For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

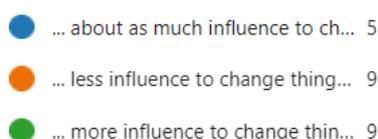


3. I feel that I have...

'...about as much influence to change things as I expected'

'...less influence to change things than I expected'

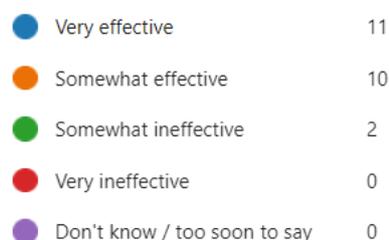
'...more influence to change things than I expected'



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, 33.9 per cent of councillors thought that they had about as much influence to change things in their area as they expected before they were elected (SBC's figure is 22%), while 33.3 per cent felt that they had more influence than expected (SBC's figure is 39.1%) and 32.8 per cent felt that they had less influence (SBC's figure is 39.1%).

4. How effective are you in your role as a councillor?



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

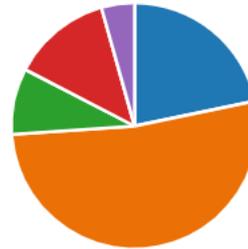
A little under a third of councillors (31.9 per cent) thought that they were very effective in their role in the council (SBC's figure is 47.8%) and 59.6 per cent rated themselves as fairly effective (SBC's

Appendix A

figure is 43.5%). Only 5.7 per cent regarded themselves as not very or not at all effective (SBC's figure is 8.7%).

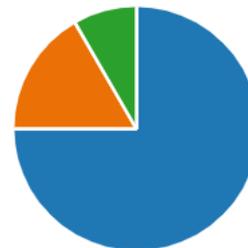
5. How effective are most Slough Borough Councillors in their roles as councillors?

● Very effective	5
● Somewhat effective	12
● Somewhat ineffective	2
● Very ineffective	3
● Don't know / too soon to say	1



6. Would you recommend becoming a Slough Borough Councillor?

● Yes	18
● No	4
● Don't know	2



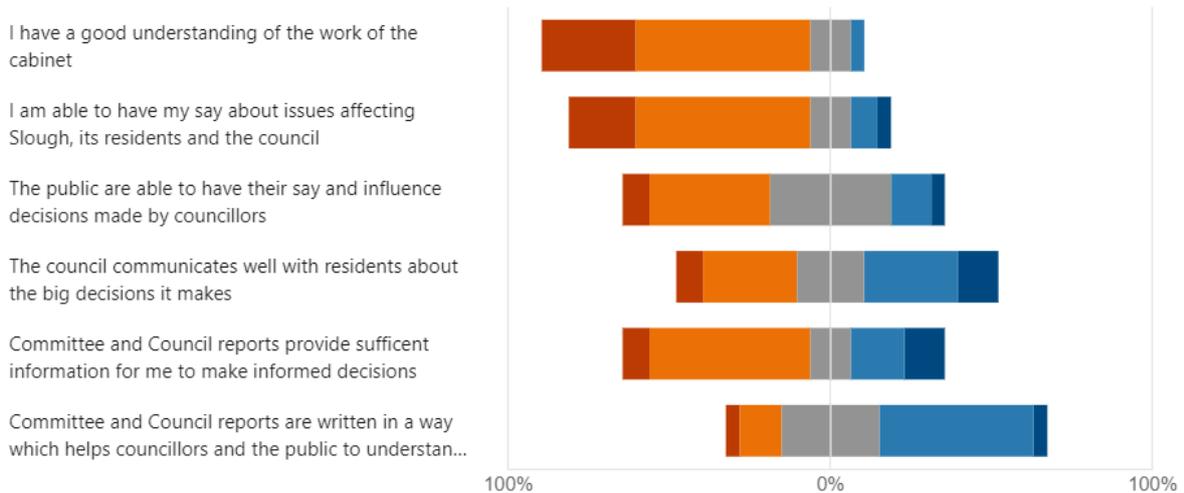
For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, 79.0 per cent of councillors nationally would recommend the role to others (SBC's figure is 75%), 8.6 per cent would not (SBC's figure is 16.7%), and 12.4 per cent did not answer or could not say (SBC's figure is 8.3%).

DEMOCRACY

26. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree



27. This space is yours for any comments on this topic

Responses

Reports are not fit for purpose, and even the Commissioners have commented on this. Councillors are , therefore, not equipped with the means to get to the bottom of problems and have full opportunity to change things for the better.

NEEDS SIMPLE REPORTS NOT IN A COMPLEX WAY

There has been some limited improvements in papers for scrutiny but still some are not being made available in time and in a way that actual allows good questioning by Cllrs. Information and figures are sometimes duplicated and almost laid out in a way that makes the information to confessing given the time to understand and put meaningful questions forward!

Only cabinet knows what they are doing but we are not aware other than that they participate in cabinet meetings and some officers meetings. I am not able to have my say about issues affecting Slough, because there is no platform for it. All meetings are agenda based so I can not raise anything that is not in agenda. We are always told to raise casework for something that we wanted to discuss, but case works are for residents issues, if councillor wanted to discuss then there is no opportunity. It is also difficult to find which officer is responsible for what, departments hierarchy should be self explanatory. We need to have briefing sessions or brainstorm sessions with each directorate so we can discuss various matters that affects Slough.

it would help if there were good introductions and executive summaries.

I think that as we are within age of digital transformation it is a time of dynamic communication, some residents would benefit from non digital forms of communication.

The last question, the reports need to be in more laymen terms

Council usually consult residents

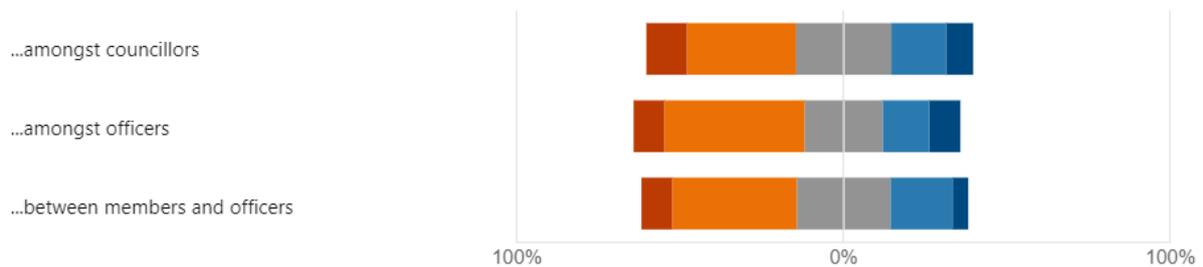
Reports are very specific and meant to be all encompassing which is fine for decision makers but are not 'user friendly for the public .

reports are still far to complex and far too much detail

CULTURE

8. There is a healthy culture and good ways of working overall...

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



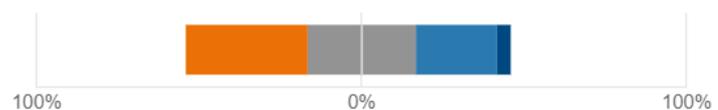
9. I have confidence in...

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



10. Senior officers understand councillors and how politics works in Slough

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



11. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

Responses

I am critical of the current organisational culture, which I think is prone to bully, but I do think there are lots of good intentions. Reports to members are often not helpful in providing real choice and sometimes don't disclose key information. Officers overwhelmingly have good intentions, but are prone, like anyone to manipulation and often pursue their own agendas. Most senior officers don't live in Slough and, therefore, lack historical perspective, don't fully understand the complexities of the local community, and are not affected by the decisions they make here in the same way as these who actually live here - not enough live local or would ever want to live in Slough!

it could do better for officers to under little more that how does politics works in slough.

Lack empathy local people who come disadvantage background as most middle class and white.

Responses

As the two recent independent investigations have found there was and remains in my view a real cultural, ownership, communication issues within the organisation. This includes the political neutrality of some officers in my personal opinion sadly.

Officers lack of professionalism and accountability

The majority of councillors are affective in their role and the relationship between councillors and officers is positive.

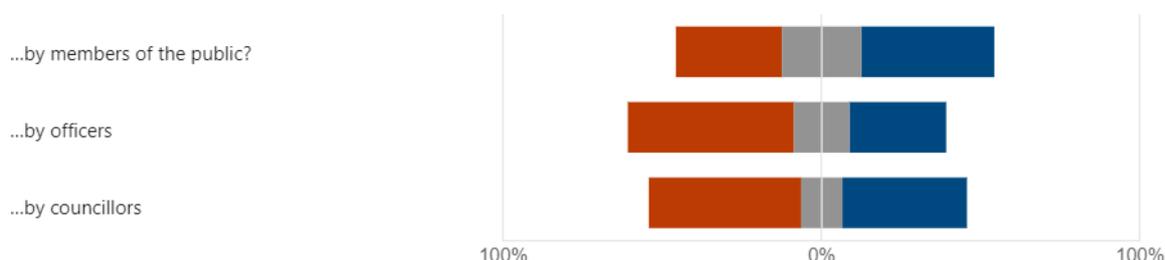
If in doubt I consult officers.

Officers have to really understand the community we all serve in order to understand the politics of the town. Particularly the drivers for why most councillors stand for public office. South Asian countries being a councillor or mayor is a role of prestige and influence. Has little to do with genuinely helping people or even understanding how to system works in order to assist.

MEMBER WELLBEING AND HANDLING ABUSE OR INTIMIDATION

28. Are effective arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour...

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



Please note that the blue colour represents 'Don't Know'.

For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, most councillors thought that their council had appropriate arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards them in their role as councillors. The proportion varied between 69.6 per cent in respect of such behaviour by council officers, 56.8 per cent in respect of councillors, and 54.8 per cent in respect of members of the public.

29. How often over the last twelve months have you...

■ Frequently ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely ■ Never



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

Just under a half of councillors (45.1 per cent) reported that they rarely felt at risk personally when fulfilling their role as a councillor, while 26.8 per cent never felt at risk, 24.1 per cent occasionally felt at risk, and 4.0 per cent frequently felt at risk.

Around one in ten councillors (10.3 per cent) had frequently experienced abuse or intimidation in their capacity as a councillor over the last twelve months, 29.4 per cent had experienced abuse or intimidation occasionally, 33.4 per cent had rarely experienced them, and 26.9 per cent had never experienced abuse or intimidation over the last twelve months.

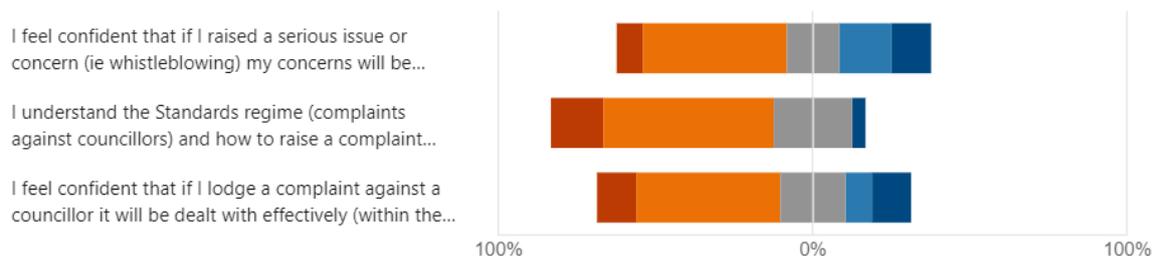
30. If you have experienced abuse or intimidation, was it from... (select any that apply)

- SBC Officer 1
- SBC Councillor 4
- A member of the public 8
- Other 4



31. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree



32. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

Responses

Some complaints have not gone as far as I have wished. There has not been positive resolution. There is more to complain about today than ever before.

Responses

My personal experience has just underlined how biased and in many ways it is pointless to hope for a fair out come but it is important to at least register your complaint as a matter of official record for any later independent review has access to such official records. Such investigation internally still are inappropriately affected by the poor biased culture that remains within SBC sadly

i feel issues i raise as important are not dealt with effectively

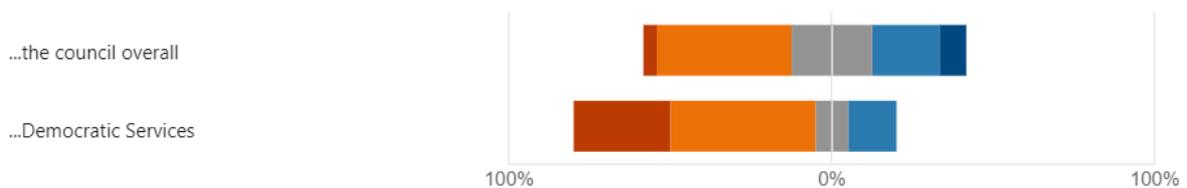
I have full confidence in officers

little confidence in the system

MEMBER SUPPORT

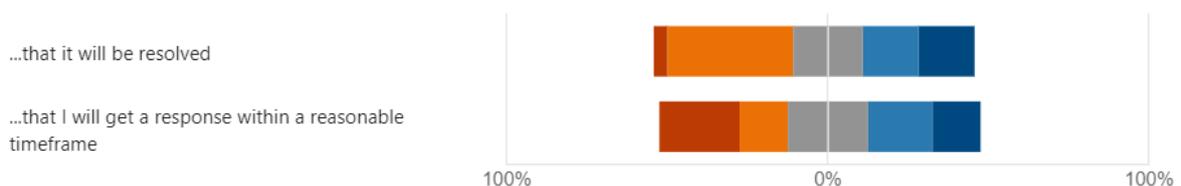
7. I am satisfied with the quality of the member support provided by...

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

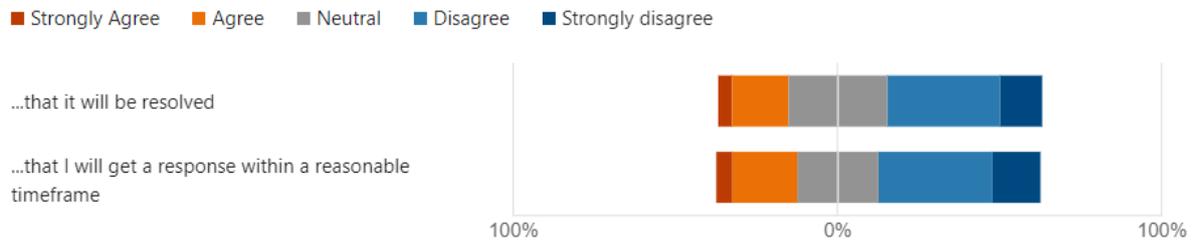


12. When I submit casework I am confident...

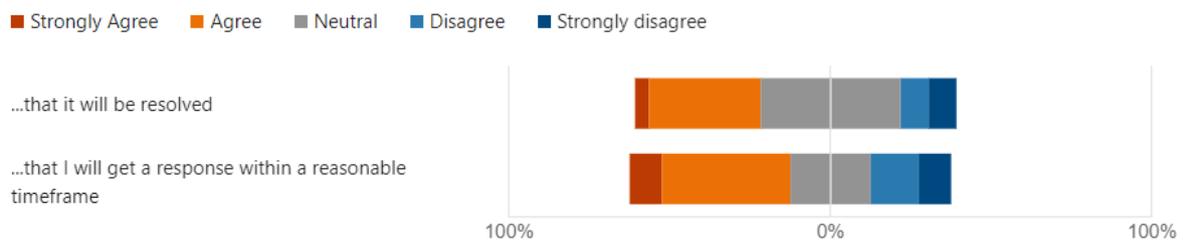
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



13. When I submit a service request (eg via the council's website) I am confident...



14. If I contact a senior officer with a question or an issue, I am confident...



15. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

Responses

Many inquiries are not responded to, requiring follow up; some are passed around with no closure; responses are generally not within an agreed or acceptable timeframe. Some positive response still don't resolve the issue. Generally, SBC provides poor customer service, is not customer focused, and does not offer good value for money.

with short of staff it hard.

My answer to the above are neutral and disagree as depends on officers and type of casework! some are better than others

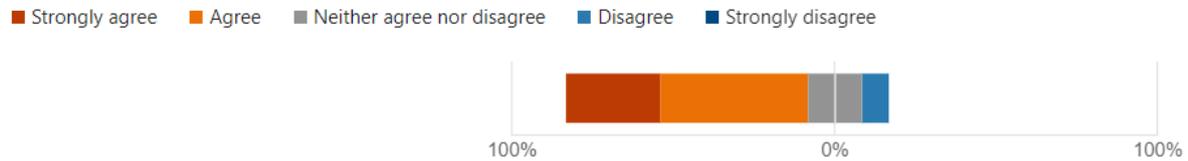
I am tracking my own caseworks/Service Requests as I am not confident enough that they will be resolved/concluded without me following up/chasing.

Officers are very help full

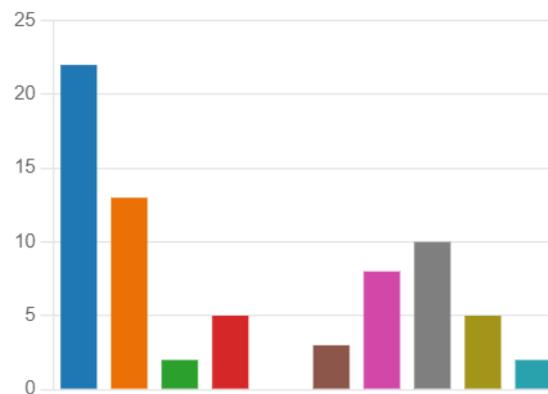
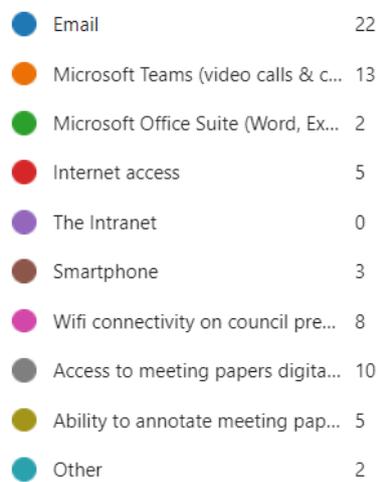
All depends on department who the responsible officer is. Huge inconsistencies across the council. Big issues when responding to a multifaceted case - as its rare to get a consolidated response.

MEMBER SUPPORT - IT

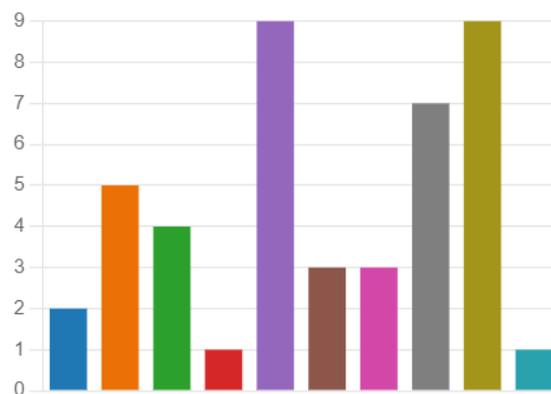
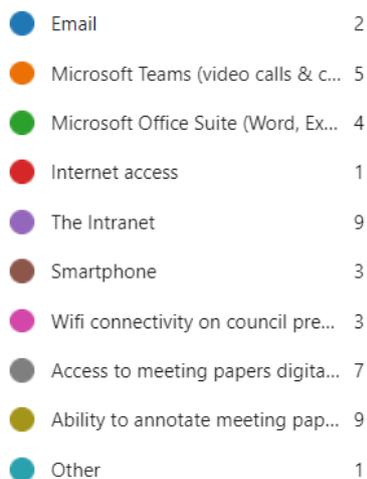
16. The council provides me with IT equipment and infrastructure which enables me to carry out my role effectively



17. What digital tools are most important to enable you carry out your role effectively?



18. Which digital tools would you most benefit from more training about?



19. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

Responses

Our systems are intermittent and especially our webcasting and internet connectivity re speed and capacity are poor

Officers/Councillors not using MS Teams as much as they could to interact

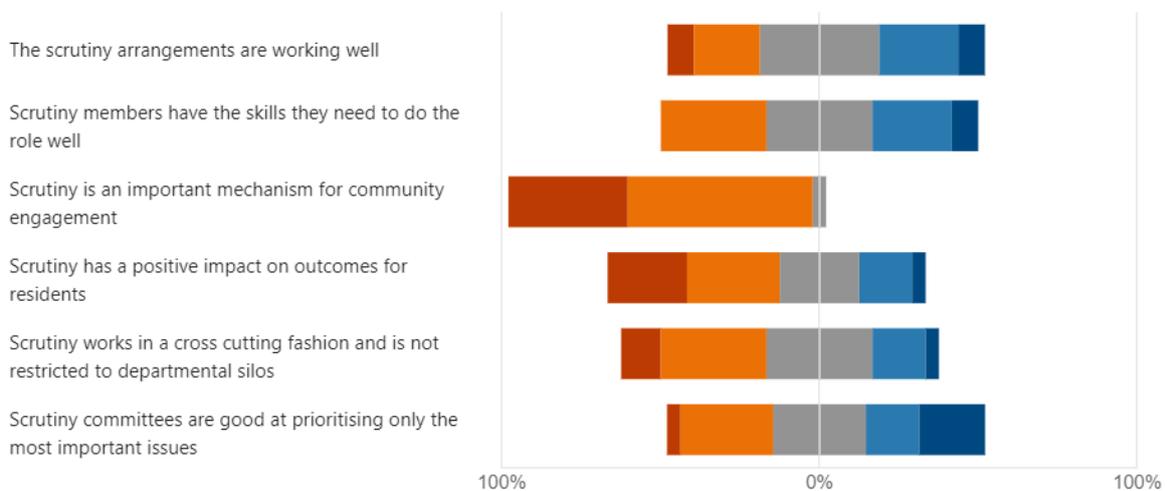
For planning meetings I am provided with paper copy If I need

wifi and connectivity in Observatory house is very poor and causes issues with signing during meeting. leading to going paper based. Many councillors sttend meetings with neither papercopies nor devices. How can these councillors be engaged and partcipate if they dont come prepared for the meetings? Who's responsible for doing these checks? surely the MO should be asking questions.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

20. When it comes to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three Scrutiny Panels...

■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree



21. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

Responses

Efforts have been made to look at issues in a cross-cutting setting but this effort is often undone at the follow-through stage - there is insufficient follow through and too much silo mentality, and convention.

Responses

SCRUTINY IS TO REVIEW THE POLICIES .

The ability to be able to scrutinise both departments and lead members has been further demised in my opion this year and remains politically biased to ruling group in a manor i feel is unacceptable

Scrutiny structure is change so this section is not of important anymore

poor training of councillors effects how well they can do their job

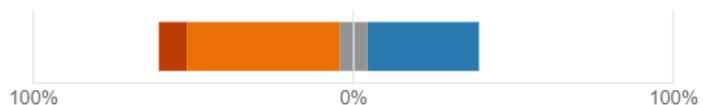
Scrutiny committee is free from political pressure which act as watchdog to the delivery of all services.

Scrutiny is made up of good officer support and councillors that are engaged and participate in the meetings. They need to have a good knowledge and understanding of the council and in particular the area they are scrutinising - which many don't.

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

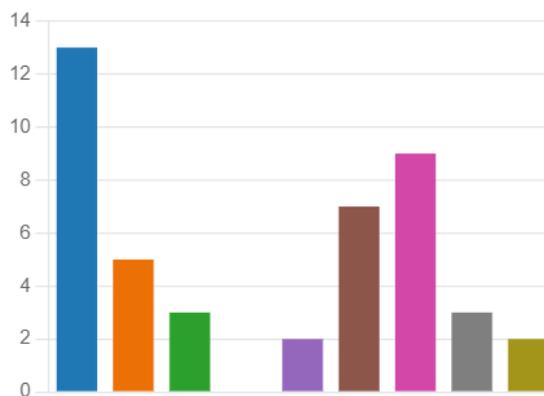
22. Councillors have the training and development opportunities they need.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



23. What would you say are the main things which prevent you from attending more member development sessions?

- Nothing prevents me - I go to t... 13
- I am not aware of them 5
- I am too busy 3
- I am sufficiently skilled and kno... 0
- The topics do not seem relevant... 2
- They happen at an inconvenient... 7
- They are not online 9
- I don't have confidence that the... 3
- Other 2



24. What top 3 things should be included in the all-councillor induction during May-August 2023?

Responses

Casework resolution IT training Understanding Council decision-making processes and review points

Training, Development,

CODE OF CONDUCT, REGISTER OF INTREST , CASEWORK MANAGEMENT , OVERVIEW OF THE FULL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ,

-Role of a Councillor -Understanding Budget reports and to how Finance works (MRP & Budget) -Improve Communication Skills (improve skills to speak at Council meeting)

Meeting conduct What relevant questions to ask planning , over view scrutiny etc not policy issues. Lots things can't be done by Councillor due budget constraints, ideas to better engagement residents .

- Communication skills with residents and colleagues - Understanding budget reports
- Role of Cllr - casework management

A proper up to date chart of organisational department contacts with full contact details including mobile phone/ landline ext as well as email addresses! Full training on Best practice Scrutiny practices giving full details of both officers requirements to respond and for Cllrs to be best assisted in making Scrutiny work!

1) Detailed hierarchy of officers and which portfolio each one owns and what departments fall under each portfolio. For example, pot holes ---> highways, parks ?, green verge ---? garage sites ? , street lamps ? We need clear self explanatory chart of which section of various public services falls into which directorate and their low level breakdown till their group manager 2) What procedures to follow if Senior officers do not reply to Councillors. Residents have complaints procedure to follow and what about Councillors, where can councillors complain if something they are not happy. 3) About new scrutiny committees, scope of member questions in Council meetings

Department area leads contacts Overview of scrutiny Finance training

Support documents

understanding finance and audit. safeguarding how to report requests for service .

SBC's Officers contact list which we used to get with up-to-date contact numbers. All the facilities available to use in council offices for members

Training for all Cllrs on scrutiny

Finance, officer responsibilities, clear guidance of roles on different committees

Responses

Communication with officers training of what to expect and how to contribute in council meetings Support network for councillors with particular needs

Raising case work Acceptable Conduct at meetings. Header level finance training

Finance, Budgeting and Scrutiny and what a good local authority is supposed to do.

Residents First rather than Party Politics Understand your role is not only sitting in a council chamber, it is to be part of your community, let them know who you are rather than only seeing them at the time of canvassing Take on board the concerns of residents and make them your priority

Your actions-Never put council in disrepute. Honesty Integrity

Responsibility to whole Borough not just ward explained more clearly Need to engage on long term work streams not just attend meetings/ask questions Take specific training for area of interest, maybe even outside of council - LGA etc

S114 - Deep dive in to local government finance How a council operates - show n tell how the different departments works How to effectively serve your community when things go wrong Casework - who, how, where to report - self service platform etc Health & Safety safeguarding Local Plan Corporate plan - what is it and why is it important Officer/ member conduct - do's and dont's

25. What additional training or development opportunities do you think councillors most need?

Responses

IT training Scrutiny training Local Government Finance and statutory obligations

USE OF IT , ROLE OF COUNCILLOR , SCRUTINY TRAINING , MEETINGS TRAINING , DEALING WITH RESIDENT AND OFFICERS , TRAINING FOR ROLES THE COUNCILLOR HAVE WORK FOR .

-Questioning Techniques (to ask officers right question in Scrutiny meetings as full information is not provided in the reports) -Casework - Pathways

New Members given training on how to conduct themselves in meeting and not be pointed out others for asking questions or made feel inferior. Learning process of life. Think outside Box . Taster sessions of different department . Especially Education , planning and complaint.

- Communication development - Casework submission

The skills on how to be a good Cllr, where to acquire the Council functioning information and the actual issues the Council is facing

Responses

Budget setting
Casework procedure
how to use lap tops to annotate documents
How to submit casework and follow up Importance of Member Development Financial situation of the Council
Effective scrutiny and withstanding community pressure
N.a
Scrutiny Meeting Training What are the right questions to ask
An understanding of what a well ran local authority does on behalf of its residents.
Officer and Councillor relations
Chairing skills Critical Thinking Ability to Analyse Information prior to decisions
Understanding the role of a councillor particularly when attending meetings - etiquette, paperless - bring your devices!! These are for you use for council business not as home computers. Code of conduct How not to be influenced by peers, residents or businesses

OTHER

41. If you would like to make any further comments you may do so here:

Responses

The survey was rather long - it might be better to break it down into several surveys on different themes.

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Standards Committee
Date:	10 October 2023
Subject:	Member Induction and Member Development Working Group
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officers:	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance & Scrutiny, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – Induction Programme 2023 as delivered

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report:

- Is an update of the report published for an inquorate meeting of the Standards Committee in April 2023
- Provides information about the 2023 Member Induction Programme (now complete)
- Seeks members' endorsement of the principles for an ongoing member development programme
- Recommends members convene a small 'Member Development Working Group,' to be consulted on the ongoing development of the Member Development Programme throughout the rest of the year (which will be built using Members' feedback from the October 2023 Member Survey).

Recommendations:

- 1. That the committee provide feedback on the induction programme for new councillors in 2023;**
- 2. That the principles for member development set out in section 3 are endorsed for the ongoing member development programme; and**
- 3. That the committee endorses the creation of a small, informal 'Member Development Working Group' of councillors and officers to advise the Monitoring Officer on member development issues throughout the year.**

Reasons for recommendations:

- To provide Councillors with the key skills, tools, knowledge and confidence to enable them to successfully navigate their roles and effectively discharge their council responsibilities.
- To demonstrate progress against the recommendations in the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's *Scrutiny Improvement Review*, including that we have begun to upskill and develop councillors' capacity and capability to take on and respond to the current significant challenges faced by the Council.
- To ensure that the Council complies with its duty to implement the Directions of the Secretary of State to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of democratic governance and scrutiny.

Commissioner Review

"Commissioners strongly support the Council having a robust Member development plan where Members take advantage of training offered and the training is of a quality that is valued by Members. A key indicator of this is feedback from training delegates and Commissioners therefore support any recommendation that encourages feedback."

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The induction programme which was delivered by Slough Borough Council for its incoming councillors is set out in Appendix A. It gave specific attention given to training of Scrutiny Members in light of the government direction on that topic.
- 2.2 The Member development plan was originally published on the agenda for an April 2023 meeting of the Standards Committee which was not quorate, and therefore the plan was not formally agreed. A small working group of councillors from that committee was convened to provide input into the induction programme, but it would now be useful to have any feedback (and formal endorsement for renewing that working group) from the Standards Committee.
- 2.3 The Member Development Plan itself takes the form of a series of principles for the way in which member induction and development will be done during the current year, and a detailed plan for induction. It was designed to focus on key skills and knowledge so that first-time Councillors could hit the ground running and to enable returning Councillors to build on their existing knowledge and skills base. This focus on new councillors and scrutiny was prescient since, in the event, 22 of the 42 councillors elected in May 2023 were new to the council. Nevertheless the plan was adapted significantly from what was originally proposed, and was supported by a lot of personalised support for individual councillors in key roles, in light of the election result and change in administration.
- 2.4 The plan was designed to provide a framework for, and to demonstrate our commitment to, the continued professional development of Councillors. In order to meet the council's improvement goals it must provide sufficient ongoing development opportunities for its decision-makers, to steadily improve their skills, knowledge and behaviours.

- 2.5 The plan is closely aligned to the requirements highlighted in the CFGS Scrutiny Review, the Directions from the Secretary of State (specifically to ensure that councillors make evidence-based decisions, and are mindful of the duty of best value), and the Council's strategic priorities, its recovery plan and vision.
- 2.6 The plan envisaged that the bulk of training would be provided in-house, with a mixture of online and in-person sessions, with accessibility enabled by modern technology such as recording sessions on Teams. Some sessions would be facilitated by external providers and councillors would also be encouraged through various other means to gain outside experience of 'what good looks like'.
- 2.7 The core pieces of the induction programme – as delivered - are presented in Appendix A, and a new Member Development Working Group is proposed. This group would work with the Monitoring Officer to firm up the detailed schedule of member development for the rest of the year and beyond, once we have Members' feedback from the forthcoming October 2023 edition of the Member Survey.

3 Member Development Plan 2023/24

- 3.1 This Plan is as originally presented in April 2023, with updates in light of developments since that date.
- 3.2 The following items comprise the principles and practices which will ensure the success and continual improvement of the Member development offer during 2023/24:

Structure and prioritisation of development offer

- 3.3 The intention overall is to prioritise as follows:
1. Mandatory courses first which comprise a minimum baseline of compliance with legal and constitutional requirements (eg with regard to Member Code of Conduct, declarations of interest, information governance, and mandatory Planning/Licensing training)
 2. Skills next (ie *how* to be an effective councillor)
 3. Subject matter knowledge, primarily delivered at moments when it is relevant and can be applied eg subject briefings in advance of decisions on those topics.
- 3.4 The induction programme set out at Appendix A followed this pattern and is split into these sections for clarity. With induction behind us, the balance is expected to shift more towards 'subject matter knowledge' while maintaining steady progress on member skills.

Scrutiny Training

- 3.5 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), with funding assistance by the Local Government Association, have delivered a programme of Scrutiny development work specially for Slough Borough Council, in light of the findings in their review of SBC's scrutiny arrangements and the developments in the service since. Their proposal was submitted in July 2022 and the council delivered it in full for the new cohort for Scrutiny members commencing immediately after the election. This was a critical thread in the Council's Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan. It included facilitated support for the development of the Scrutiny Work

Programme as well as bespoke training for the scrutiny committee, its chair, the cabinet and officers.

- 3.6 Full details of the CfGS proposal can be found at [Appendix B to the report published in April 2023](#) and is described in Appendix A as delivered.

Other Committee-specific training

- 3.7 Where possible, committee-specific training (such as that for planning and licencing) took place on the evening of their first scheduled meeting, as is custom and practice at SBC.
- 3.8 Further training and development is expected to take place on at least an annual basis, and for key committees which are currently subject to considerable corporate focus (such as Scrutiny and Audit) on a more frequent basis through the system of regular pre-meetings.

External expertise, including visits and mentoring

- 3.9 In the past members have had some concerns about training delivered by third parties, both because it costs money and because training delivered in this way has sometimes been felt to lack sufficient awareness of Slough Borough Council's local context, or the lived experience of SBC's councillors.
- 3.10 Efforts must be made to mitigate this effect however it is important to recognise the value of input from outside sources. In particular, the council's commissioners have repeatedly expressed that they felt there would be a benefit for SBC Councillors of visiting other authorities and meeting councillors from other authorities in order to develop a stronger sense of 'what good looks like'.
- 3.11 A programme of visits to other authorities is proposed a part of the ongoing development programme, with an emphasis on committee Chairs gaining contacts and experience with their opposite numbers at other authorities.
- 3.12 The LGA has offered to assist the Council with identifying suitable councils to visit. Officers are currently in the process of arranging experiences for councillors linked to other local authorities and to the House of Commons, to build on the induction programme.
- 3.13 During the previous administration, the LGA provided a structured mentoring service to Members with key roles and this has been reconstructed for the new administration too, at great effort. The LGA provide hand-picked mentors for SBC councillors who are experienced councillors from other authorities around the country. These mentors are professional and are paid for their time, and the LGA has funded this work. Anecdotal feedback from the members involved has generally been very positive.
- 3.14 Most cabinet members in the new administration have now accepted a Mentor and begun working with them, as have those committee chairs covered by the scheme.

Remote working and creating a video library

- 3.15 In light of the significant proportion of members of Slough Borough Council who work full time and/or have caring responsibilities it is considered beneficial to

conduct a significant proportion of traditional development and training sessions online rather than in-person. This also enables recording of these sessions via MS Teams. A library of member development videos can then be built, hosted by Democratic Services on SharePoint, for members to review in their own time at a later date. This is intended to increase the overall uptake of learning and development opportunities and allows members to access content at a time which suits them rather than having to attend a specific training session.

- 3.16 However there will remain an important role for face-to-face sessions when different learning styles are being employed, for example coaching, mentoring, whole-committee workshops and applied learning in-committee will all benefit from being conducted in-person where possible. In practice, a fair proportion of member development sessions in 2023 have been in-person because this was felt to be beneficial when so many councillors are brand new. Members views are sought going forward via the proposed working group.

Members' Handbook 2023

- 3.17 The induction programme was supplemented by the Members' Handbook, which is designed to be a resource for Members throughout their term of office. It contains a wide range of useful and practical information regarding their roles and responsibilities, how the Council operates, its vision and priorities and support available for Members.

Senior Officer attendance

- 3.18 There is an expectation that subject-matter training will be delivered and/or attended by senior officers so that there is accountability and appropriately strategic engagement with Members. Senior officer buy-in to member development has been good during the 2023 induction programme.

Measuring and Monitoring Satisfaction

- 3.19 In the past, response rates from Members to post-course surveys have been extremely low which makes it difficult to assess the success of the training provided. Regrettably, this pattern has continued since the election – only 5 responses to satisfaction surveys have been received across the entire induction programme.
- 3.20 Members' views are welcome on how to improve our visibility of member satisfaction with training sessions. In the meantime the Member Survey has been used as a means to assess overall satisfaction with member development and the next iteration of that survey is due in October 2023, giving us a better view of member satisfaction with the induction programme. The previous council's baseline impressions can be found in the member survey item elsewhere on today's agenda.

Member Development Charter

- 3.21 Some authorities (13 in the South East) have [obtained 'charter status'](#) for Member Development. This is essentially a system which recognises local authorities which have been formally assessed to have met a set of criteria defined by the Local Government Association. The criteria relate to the quality of member development offered by the authority. In our region the assessment and associated support is carried out by South East Employers. There is a cost of about £3,000 associated with gaining charter status and a significant investment of officer and member time

is required. For example, one criterion has been that all members should have a personal development plan and regular 1:1 meetings with a lead officer to assess progress against that plan.

- 3.22 While charter plus would be a worthy goal for SBC, it is not considered that resources are available to support the required level of investment in 2023/24. However, members should keep an eye on the possibility that SBC could aim for charter status by the end of the new four-year administration, if the required resources can be identified and the cost justified.

Making courses 'mandatory' and differentiating between new and experienced Members

- 3.23 Members are not employees and the Council has no sanctions it can apply to force Members to undertake training, except where some specific committees constitutionally require their Members to undertake training in order to sit on a committee. This is a nationally recognised issue when it comes to Member development. Nevertheless, a strong expectation can be set by Group Leaders who are in a position to apply sanctions within their Groups as they see fit.
- 3.24 In all invitations and communications relating to the induction programme, the following terms were used in order to best encourage take-up of training by the most relevant councillors:

- **Mandatory** – failure to attend would not be in compliance with the requirements on members set out in the constitution and/or prevent you from sitting on a specific committee
- **Essential** – All Members are expected by their own Group Leaders to attend
- **Encouraged** – All Members would benefit from attending and it will be relevant to all Members
- **Welcome** – All Members would benefit from attending, but it may be less relevant for some.

Scheduling

- 3.25 It is intended that online working and recording of member development sessions will enable the councillors to access learning and development courses regardless of the time of day they are held. However, in general it is considered best to hold online sessions around the end of the working day but before evening meetings (eg between 17:00-18:00) or to hold in-person sessions immediately before formal meetings (17:30-18:20). Democratic Services will continue to be responsible for scheduling member development sessions in order to minimise the frequency of clashes with the formal meeting calendar.

Format

- 3.26 There is an expectation that presenters will provide an active learning environment with varying styles of learning and presentation and opportunities for discussion. This will continue to be assessed through Member feedback.

Attendance

- 3.27 Members' attendance will be recorded as per any other Member meeting. The Member Survey report elsewhere on today's agenda gives some insight into

Members' reasons for not attending sessions, however the greatest response from councillors was that nothing prevents them. The annual production of the Member development plan should continue to report to Members on attendance statistics in a generalised fashion to inform any potential actions as necessary if attendance or compliance is low. This will be due at the next 6-monthly meeting of the Standards Committee in April.

LGA resources – e-learning and workbooks

3.28 Slough Borough Council is a Member of the Local Government Association. This Membership includes access for Slough's Members to a number of e-learning courses and workbooks. The LGA is always releasing new content and courses, and Democratic Services stays abreast of this content and includes it in the regular Member Newsletter every Friday.

3.29 Self-service is a key tenet of the Council's current transformation programme. Councillors have been guided to access the following e-learning courses via self-registration with the LGA. We anticipate that take-up so far will be low. After a new round of comms on this topic, data about completion rates will be monitored and reported to Group Leaders:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Holding council meetings online
- Facilitation and conflict resolution
- Effective ward Councillor
- Scrutiny
- Influencing skills
- Local government finance
- Supporting mentally healthier communities

3.30 Councillors have been referred to the many LGA workbooks available for them to work through in their own time, through a scheduled series of articles in the Members' Newsletter over the period of the council, including:

- Acting on climate change
- Being an effective ward Councillor
- Bribery and fraud prevention
- Chaining skills
- Community leadership
- Community safety
- Councillor/officer relations
- Engaging young people
- Handling casework
- Health and safety in the council
- Health in All Policies and COVID-19
- Local government finance
- Neighbourhood & community engagement
- Neighbourhood planning - ward Councillors
- New Councillors
- Scrutiny of finance
- Supporting residents with complex issues

Member Survey

- 3.31 A survey of members was carried out and the results can be found elsewhere on today's agenda. This includes important data about members' satisfaction with member development and a significant amount of valuable free-text comments providing suggestions for future training. To avoid duplication of paperwork those comments are not reproduced in this report but they can be found elsewhere on today's agenda.
- 3.32 The survey results were taken into account by officers in the development of the induction programme. In addition a Member Development Working Group assisted officers with reviewing members' feedback in order to inform the remainder of the ongoing Member development schedule.

Resources for delivery of the Member Development Plan

- 3.33 Given the financial climate in which the council finds itself, Member Development will need to be delivered within existing resources and it should be noted that the induction programme was ambitious given the context. Accordingly, co-operation by the whole council will be necessary in order to deliver a year-round programme of learning for Members.

Parish Councils

- 3.34 The Monitoring Officer has previously written to the Clerks of the 3 parishes on the Borough, offering assistance in relation to any matters arising under the Parish Council's Code of Conduct or any other related issues, but this offer has not been taken up, to date. The Monitoring Officer has again written to the Clerks specifically asking if he can assist with any training of Parish Councillors on the Code of Conduct and asking for assurance as to what training has been given in relation to the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer will update members at the meeting of any response.

4. Implications of the Recommendation

4.1 Financial implications

While a modest budget is available for individual members to attend external training or to bring in external trainers during the year, this report does not commit members to any specific spend. This budget is managed and administered by Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Manager has the authority to determine payment from this for external providers of any courses mentioned in this report, without the need for a councillor decision.

4.2 *Legal implications*

None, other than as referred to in the report.

4.3 *Risk management implications*

None, other than as referred to in the report.

4.4 Environmental implications

None

4.5 Equality implications

None

5. Background Papers

None

Appendix A – Key aspects of Member Induction Schedule 2023

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION						
Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
PRE-INDUCTION						
Election					Thurs 4 May	
Count					Friday 5 May	
At count: Sign acceptance of office Sign IT governance form Provide contact details Initial photograph taken			Mandatory		Friday 5 May	In person
At count: All members issued with welcome pack and declarations of Interest forms					Friday 5 May	In person
Group meetings and administration time					w/c 8 May w/c 15 May	
INDUCTION – WELCOME and bitesize first modules.						
New Members Welcome Evening	Essential	Essential	Essential		Thurs 11 May 18:00-19:30	In person
CLT welcome and corporate overview (including financial position and governance responsibilities)						
Induction programme overview						
Sign acceptance of office (any not complete at election count)			Mandatory		Appointments with individual new Members	In person

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION						
Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
					as per availability 11-14 May	
Distribute IT equipment and IT training support for O365 etc		Essential			Appointments with IT ASAP after election - TBC	In person
All new Members to be allocated 'buddies' from existing cohort in their party – organised by Group Leaders						
INDUCTION - SKILLS						
Pre-AGM briefing in council chamber for all new Councillors	Welcome	Essential	Welcome		18 May 17:30 prior to the Annual Meeting (up to 60 minutes long)	In person
Pre-meeting before each committee meets for the first time *Key procedure rules and practical tips eg speaking through the Chair etc * Purpose of committee, ways of working, importance of reading reports, tips for reading reports				Essential for all members of the relevant committee	Prior to each committee	In person
Induction Workshop 1 - 1. Code of Conduct and Member Officer Protocol 2. Improvement and Recovery (Non - Finance) 3. Governance & Decision-Making	Essential	Essential	Essential		8th June 2023	In person
Induction Workshop 2 1.Safeguarding Adults	Essential	Essential	Essential		14th June 2023	In person

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION						
Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
				Governance Cttee Members		
O&S training – first session	Encouraged	Essential	Encouraged	Essential: O&S Members	30 May 6:30pm	In person
Further O&S training sessions: 1:1 support for Chair and Vice Chair of CISC – 13 June Planning an Effective Scrutiny Work Programme – 4 July Cabinet-only scrutiny training – 7 September Extended CLT (officers) training Budget/finance scrutiny (cabinet and scrutiny) – 6 September				Essential: O&S Members, Cabinet, Officers as appropriate	June-September	Mixture of in person and online
Chairing skills	Welcome	Welcome	Welcome	Essential: All Chairs and Vice Chairs	Two sessions in w/c 22 May	online
IT drop-in sessions	Welcome	Encouraged	Welcome		At each Council meeting	Mixture of in person and online
Visits to other local authorities, for Chairs to meet their opposite numbers and for committee members to view other committees in action	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		Year-round	Mixture of in person and online

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION						
Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
First Aid	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		TBC	In person
MEMBER DEVELOPMENT - KNOWLEDGE						
Directorate priorities – ‘An evening with...’ each Exec Director. Exec Directors to consider use of site visit opportunities.	Welcome	Encouraged	Welcome		TBC	Online
Cabinet-focused development (designed with new cabinet – have had a series of away-days)				Essential: Cabinet Members	Spread across the year	TBC
Councillors will be referred to the 28 Local Government Association workbooks available for them to work through in their own time including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting on climate change • Being an effective ward Councillor • Bribery and fraud prevention • Chairing skills • Community leadership • Community safety • Councillor/officer relations • Engaging young people • Handling casework • Health and safety in the council • Health in All Policies and COVID-19 	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		In Members’ own time	N/A

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION						
Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government finance • Neighbourhood & community engagement • Neighbourhood planning - ward Councillors • New Councillors • Scrutiny of finance • Supporting residents with complex issues 						

Slough Borough Council

Report to:	Standards Committee
Date:	10 th October 2023
Subject:	Schedule of Complaints - Update
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Nick Pontone, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update in relation to the activity under the Councillors' Code of Conduct in 2023/24.

Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to note the outcome of complaints under the Code of Conduct as set out in Appendix 1.

Reason:

The Councillors' Code of Conduct is a key part of the Council's Ethnical Framework and this report updates Members on activity since May 2023.

Commissioner Review

Commissioners have noted this report.

2. Report

Introduction

- 2.1 At the start of the 2022/23 municipal year the Council set up a separate Standards Committee to assist the Council to meet its duty under s.27 of the Localism Act 2011. Part of the Committee's remit is to advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillor's Code of Conduct and to determine written complaints made against an elected member alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer is also scheduled to produce bi-annual reports on Member Conduct Complaints. This is the first report on such complaints during the municipal year and the second update will be presented to the Committee on 19th March 2024.

Complaints made under Code of Conduct in 2022/23 and to date in 2023/24

- 2.7 The Committee was due to receive a report at the previous meeting in April 2023 covering all complaints in 2022/23, however, the meeting was not quorate and the report was therefore not considered or noted. Details of these complaints are therefore included in Appendix 1 as well as all formal complaints received in the 2023/24 municipal year up to 25th September 2023.
- 2.8 There have been 4 formal complaints made to date under the Councillors' Code of Conduct since May 2023. All the complaints have been about Borough councillors. For comparison, there were a total of 5 complaints determined in 2022/23, 4 about Borough councillors and 1 about a Parish councillor.
- 2.9 The induction programme for councillors following the elections in May 2023 included training on the Code of Conduct and other aspects of the ethical framework.

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 places a duty on local authorities to ensure that their members and co-opted members maintain high standards of conduct and require them to adopt a code of conduct for their members.
- 3.2.2 Section 28 confirms that the adopted code should be consistent with the seven "Nolan" principles of standards in public life and must set out the rules that the authority wants to put in place in relation to registering and disclosing pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. The Council adopted the LGA's model code of conduct in 2021.
- 3.2.2 Section 28 also requires local authorities to put in place arrangements under which it can investigate an allegation of a breach of the code made in writing and, if it considers that it warrants investigation, requires that the authority appoint at least one independent person whose views must be sought after it has made an investigation and before it takes a decision. The Council appointed Mr R Tomkinson as the Council's independent person from 19 May 2022.

3.3 Risk management implications

- 3.3.1 Having an effective code of conduct in place setting out the standards of behaviour for elected members and an effective system for managing and monitoring such behaviour is a key part of the Council's ethical framework and risk management system. As a public body, the Council should act lawfully and in the public interest and failing to do so opens it up to challenge. Decisions of the council can be challenged where they have not been made on a rational basis or having followed a fair process. Ensuring that elected members take decisions in an appropriate and properly informed way, including declining to take part in decision-making when they have a relevant interest, will help ensure fair and lawful decisions and reduce the risk of successful legal challenge.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this decision.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to pay due regard to the need to

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.5.2 The Code of Conduct requires members to promote equalities and not discriminate unlawfully against any person. It explains the central role that elected members have in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the Council's performance and strategic aims and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

4. Background Papers

None.

This page is intentionally left blank

Code of Conduct complaints – 2022/23

Date received	Nature of complaint	Subject member	Outcome	Comments
1 May 2022	Lack of respect	Borough Cllr 1	No need for formal investigation – member did not breach Code of Conduct	Determined by former MO
Prior to 19 May 2022	Relationship between two elected members	Parish Cllr 2	Recommendation for informal resolution via mediation or training	Determined by former MO
Prior to 19 May 2022	Lack of respect	Borough Cllr 1	No need for formal investigation – member did not breach Code of Conduct	Determined by former MO
18 May 2022	Various allegations – detail unclear	Borough Cllr 3	Further information requested on 23 May 2022, as allegations relate to historic matters and lack of detail in order to assess complaint. Clarification sought regarding disclosure of complaint to subject member. As at 11 July 2022 no further information received, complaint closed.	Independent person consulted and responded on 1 July 2022 confirming that he was satisfied with the proposal to close the complaint, which was appropriate and in line with the Council's procedure.

14 November 2022	Lack of respect	Borough Cllr 4	No formal investigation and no further action. The Monitoring Officer offered to facilitate a meeting between the councillors involved but that offer has not been taken up.	Independent Member was consulted and was of the view that a formal investigation was not warranted as the incident was not sufficiently serious to warrant investigation.
------------------	-----------------	----------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Code of Conduct complaints – 2023/24

Date received	Nature of complaint	Subject member	Outcome	Comments
29 August 2023	Failure to register declarable interests	Borough Cllr 1	Complaint withdrawn.	No formal investigation required.
1 September 2023	Various allegations including abuse of power	Borough Cllr 2	Informal resolution resulting in action taken and apology to complainant. Complaint closed.	No formal investigation required.
1 September 2023	Various allegations including abuse of power	Borough Cllr 3	Informal resolution sought resulting in apology to complainant.	-
19 September 2023	Damaged the reputation of office/authority ; used their position improperly; above of power; comprising the impartiality of people who work for the authority; and not behaving with integrity.	Borough Cllr 4	Ongoing.	-

This page is intentionally left blank