

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 3 rd July 2023
Report Subject	Overview of Ethical Complaints
Report Author	Chief Officer Governance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report shows a summary of the ethical complaints alleging a breach of the Code that have been submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). As per the Committee's resolution, the complaints distinguish between different Councils and Councillors whilst still remaining anonymous.

The report gives the Committee an understanding of the number and types of complaints being made, and the outcome of consideration by the PSOW. Since the last report (9 January 2023) 7 complaints have been received none of which were investigated. There are still 5 outstanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee notes the number and type of complaints.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
1.01	The attached spreadsheet at Appendix A lists in summary form the complaints received during 2022/2023. Each entry lists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Ombudsman's reference number (year/4 digit reference) the type of Council (Community, County or Town) the complainant (Councillor, officer, public) the provisions which are alleged to have been breached the decision at each of the 3 stages of investigation
1.02	Since the last report 7 complaints have been received – from 22/05046 onwards. These complaints vary in terms of matters alleged and the circumstances of the incident.
1.03	Six of the most recent complaints were not investigated. In relation to 23/00482 it is worth noting that the group leader, at the request of the

	Monitoring Officer, persuaded the member to remove the post, though this did not stop the complainant submitting their complaint.
1.04	There are presently 5 complaints being investigated (3 made in 2022/23 and 1 remaining from 2021/22) along with one recent one. The complaint dating from 2021/22 in respect of bullying a Town Council clerk is nearly 20 months old but is apparently nearing conclusion. The other investigations are still proceeding. The complaints being investigated are on a variety of issues with no common pattern, although 3 relate to the same individual as can be seen from the record.
1.05	This report is correct as at the date of preparation. If we are notified of the outcome of any complaints after this date a verbal update will be provided.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None associated with the complaints recorded in this report. Working with individual Town and Community Councils to address relationship breakdown is time consuming. Where some form of whole Council “mediation” is required, the Council has been recommending the use of an experienced governance consultant at the cost of the Council involved.
2.02	If any complaint is referred to the Committee for a hearing, then training on how to hold such hearing s will be provided. This will involve external training providers and will be a one-off cost in the region of several thousand pounds.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix A - Number of complaints.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – the Ombudsman investigates service complaints and alleged breaches of the code. The Ombudsman will only investigate an alleged breach of the Code if there is clear evidence of a breach and it is in the public interest to do so.