

**Legal & Democracy
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TO ALL PARISH CLERKS

Our Ref TWM/PR304-001
Your Ref
Date 10 April 2024

Dear Clerk

CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

At the request of the Borough Council's Standards Committee I am writing to all parish and community councils in the borough seeking information and assistance in the light of recent significant increases in the volume of code of conduct complaints in relation to parish/community councillors.

I should make it clear at the outset that in doing so neither I nor members of the Standards Committee wish to suggest that the increase in complaints is simply the result of lower standards of compliance at local council level. A number of different factors will be contributing to this trend.

The purpose of this letter is to make your council aware of the issue, and of the significant cost to all residents of the borough, and to seek your council's views and assistance in achieving a significant reduction in the incidence and cost of complaints.

I attach a copy of my Annual Monitoring Officer Report for 2023 which was presented to the Borough Council's Standard Committee on 30 January 2024 and to the full Council on 29 February 2024. I also attach the Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting.



You will see from my Annual Report:

- (i) at paras 9,10 and Table 1 that the volume of code of conduct complaints increased markedly to unsustainable levels in both 2021 and 2023. The cost to the Borough Council (and therefore to residents) is huge with each outsourced complaint costing on average £4000 to process with a significant internal overhead on each case as well; and
- (ii) at para11 a series of suggested next steps are proposed, including developing a training programme in discussion with KALC, exploring other potential measures with KALC and sharing information and seeking views of Local Councils.

Could I therefore please ask that this letter is shared with your current /new Chairman and that an item is included on a parish council agenda as early as possible in the new municipal year from May, seeking your council's views on possible measures to reduce the incidence and cost of complaints, including suggestions for the most helpful training topics for a future programme.

I look forward to hearing from you. If you or your Chairman would like further information please do let me know.

Yours faithfully



Terry Mortimer
Solicitor to the Council
& Monitoring Officer

