

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Annual Monitoring of Code of Conduct Complaints Against Members 2023-24	
REPORT OF Borough Solicitor	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Standards Committee	DATE 21 October 2024
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report provides an update on Code of Conduct complaints against Members.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Cheryl Hardman Principal Committee Officer Camden Town Hall Judd Street London WC1H 9JE 020 7974 1619 cheryl.hardman@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>That Standards Committee notes and comment on the contents of the report.</p>	

Signed: 

Borough Solicitor

Date: 9 October 2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors. As part of this work, it is responsible for the local consideration, investigation and determination of complaints. This report provides information on Code of Conduct complaints against Members in the year between the last update on 26th June 2023 and the end of June 2024.

2. Feedback from Recent Complaints

- 2.1. There are very few complaints made about Members in Camden, which is a positive indication of the conduct of Camden's councillors. The low number of complaints has remained steady over recent years. Between the last report to the Committee on complaints about Members on 26th June 2023 and the end of June 2024, 11 complaints were received (an anonymised summary of the closed cases is included at Appendix A). This can be compared with data from recent annual reporting on complaints to Standards Committee as follows:

Date range	Number of complaints
26 th June 2023 – June 2024	11
29 th June 2022 – June 2023	9
29 th June 2021 – 29 th June 2022	9

- 2.2. The Borough Solicitor and an Independent Person decided that none of the complaints required a formal investigation as the behaviour described in the complaints would not have constituted a breach of the Code of Conduct. It remains important that such complaints remain confidential so any comment on them needs to bear this in mind. No decisions by the Borough Solicitor not to investigate those complaints were successfully appealed at the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 2.3. There are no significant trends among the small number of complaints received, although lack of ongoing engagement with community projects or with local issues was raised by a small number. It is noted that the Code of Conduct does not cover the perceived quality of work and that in several of the cases, the relevant officers were already addressing the issues raised.

3. Politically motivated complaints

- 3.1. It should be noted that Camden has traditionally avoided politically motivated complaints, which has continued to be the case and has contributed to the numbers remaining very low.

4. Independent Persons

- 4.1. Our Independent Persons, who were recently reappointed by Council for another year, continue to be extremely helpful both in constructively inputting into the Borough Solicitor's decisions as to whether or not to investigate a complaint, and generally by making themselves readily available and being

quick to provide responses. This outside view is extremely important and helpful in coming to a sensible decision on the complaints that are received.

5. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

5.1. There are no financial impacts resulting from this report.

6. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

6.1. This is a report of the Borough Solicitor and there are no other legal comments.

7. Environmental Implications

7.1. There are no environmental implications.

8. Appendices

Appendix A: Anonymised summary of complaints 2023/24

REPORT ENDS

Appendix A

Anonymised summary of complaints (2023/24)

Substance of complaints	Reason not to investigate
That behaviour had been antagonistic and denigrating, undermining a community project.	Complainant did not respond to follow up emails asking for clarification on certain points.
That two ward councillors had not engaged in or responded about a community project.	The Code of Conduct does not cover the perceived quality of work or what projects ward councillors should take an interest in.
That a councillor breached accepted protocols for raising local issues with relevant ward councillors.	Not covered by Code of Conduct.
That two ward councillors had engaged in incompetent and unprofessional casework.	The Code of Conduct does not cover the perceived quality of work.
That a councillor had not responded to emails.	Not covered by Code of Conduct. There is no obligation on councillors to be personally involved in cases, particularly when the relevant officers are already involved.
That a councillor had accused complainant of being abusive.	Code of Conduct does not remove freedom of speech, even where this was perceived as robust or challenging by the recipient of the speech.
That a councillor had not responded to emails.	Not covered by Code of Conduct. There is no obligation on councillors to be personally involved in cases, particularly when the relevant officers are already involved.
That the decision-making process followed by a councillor did not comply with the Seven Principles of Public Life.	Decision-making processes and political values of councillors not covered by the Code of Conduct.
That a councillor had not responded to emails.	Not covered by Code of Conduct. There is no obligation on councillors to be personally involved in cases.
That a councillor used inappropriate language on social media and blocked residents.	Code of Conduct does not remove freedom of speech and councillors are

	not obliged to engage with residents on social media.
That a councillor had made baseless accusations of corruption against a resident.	No details were provided regarding the allegations, despite numerous requests, and therefore it was not in the public interest to investigate.