

West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

West Suffolk
working together

Title of Report:	Summary of Complaints Received for 2014	
Report No:	JST/JT/14/001	
Decisions plan reference:	Not Applicable	
Report to and date:	West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee	15 December 2014
Lead officer:	Joy Bowes Monitoring Officer Tel: 01284 757141 Email: joy.bowes@westsuffolk.gov.uk	Peter Heard Deputy Monitoring Officer Tel: 01638 719309 Email: peter.heard@westsuffolk.gov.uk
Purpose of report:	To provide Members with a summary of the complaints received under the Code of Conduct in 2014.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that the Committee notes the report.	
Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation is not appropriate for this report 	
Alternative option(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	
Implications:		
Are there any financial implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any staffing implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any ICT implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
Not applicable	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		None	
Documents attached:		None	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

1.1 **Complaints**

- 1.1.1 In the calendar year 2014 to date 12 complaints against councillors have been received.

FHDC	SEBC	PARISH/TOWN
3	1	8 (2 FHDC, 6 SEBC)

The number of complaints over the year amount to an average of about one complaint per month. The level of complaints does not appear to be showing significant change since the new regime was introduced, nor is there any pattern emerging that would give cause for concern. Members are therefore asked simply to note this response as no action is required.

1.2 **Outcomes**

- 1.2.1 One complaint concerned three members of the same parish council and arose out of the conduct of council meetings. Training on Bias and Predetermination was recommended and the Monitoring Officer offered to give the training at no cost. Nothing further has been heard from the parish council and, while we have no power to impose the training, or sanction them for not taking it up, we have written to the clerk to find out if they acted on the recommendation.

After the initial consideration, no further action was required in nine cases.

One case went to an investigation and is the subject of a report to this committee.

An apology was proposed as further action in two cases.

2. **Matters Alleged**

- 2.1 The matters alleged mainly concerned possible breaches of Paragraph 1 of the Code concerning treating others with respect – both in what was said, what was written and the councillor's behaviour.

In one case the complaint was not pursued because at the time of the conduct complained of the Councillor was not carrying out the role of councillor.

There were two allegations around alleged failure to make a declaration of interests, but these were not found to be substantiated.