

PROGRESS REPORT ON COMPLAINTS

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

- 1** The purpose of this report is to provide members with information regarding the number of complaints received between April 2021 and end March 2023.
- 2** Twenty-eight complaints were received during this period, of which five separate complaints were in respect of the same alleged incident involving a member of Hetton Town Council and three separate complaints related to the same alleged incident involving a Sunderland City Councillor. One complaint received during the period was about two councillors and another complaint was about three councillors. Nine complaints related to Hetton Town Councillors and the remainder to Sunderland City Councillors. Twenty of the twenty-eight complainants were councillors or individuals who are known to be engaged in the political field, for example, the complainant has stood as an election candidate.
- 3.** Two complaints were resolved by agreement, two were withdrawn and two referred for investigation. The investigation into one of those matters is ongoing and the other is almost concluded. No further action was taken in respect of the remainder of the complaints. In most cases, this was because the complaint did not meet the threshold to proceed to investigation. There was also a small number where the alleged conduct clearly did not take place in the member's capacity as a councillor. In addition, during this period, a complaint that had been received prior to April 2021 and had been referred for investigation was concluded, with a finding being made of a breach of the Code of Conduct, which was reported to Council.
- 4.** While the subject matter of the complaints was varied, eight of the complaints related to posts on social media.
- 5. Recommendation**

Members are requested to note this report.