

Code of Conduct Complaints 2024/2025 – Quarterly Update – Q2

Lead Officer: David Clark, Monitoring Officer

Authors: David Clark, Monitoring Officer

Contact Details: David.clark@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary

- 1.1.** Following the creation and provision to the Committee of the monthly Code of Conduct complaint summaries (see Appendix 1) this report provides an update to the Committee regarding the number of complaints received in Q2 2024/2025, any themes emerging and the performance in respect of acknowledgment and substantive responses against our published timescales.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** That Committee note the update report at the end of quarter two in respect of Code of Conduct complaints and provide any associated comments, observations and direction.

3. Background

- 3.1.** Somerset Council adopted the LGA Model Code of Conduct following a decision of Full Council in February 2022 ahead of the elections in May 2022. That Code has transitioned to the new Somerset Council from April 2023.
- 3.2.** All Code of conduct complaints have been administered centrally from that point and virtually a full four quarters have been completed. This report, therefore, provides an update to Members in respect of volumes, performance and any identifiable trends. The purposes of the report is not to review any individual or groups of complaints but to consider the overall numbers, trends and performance.

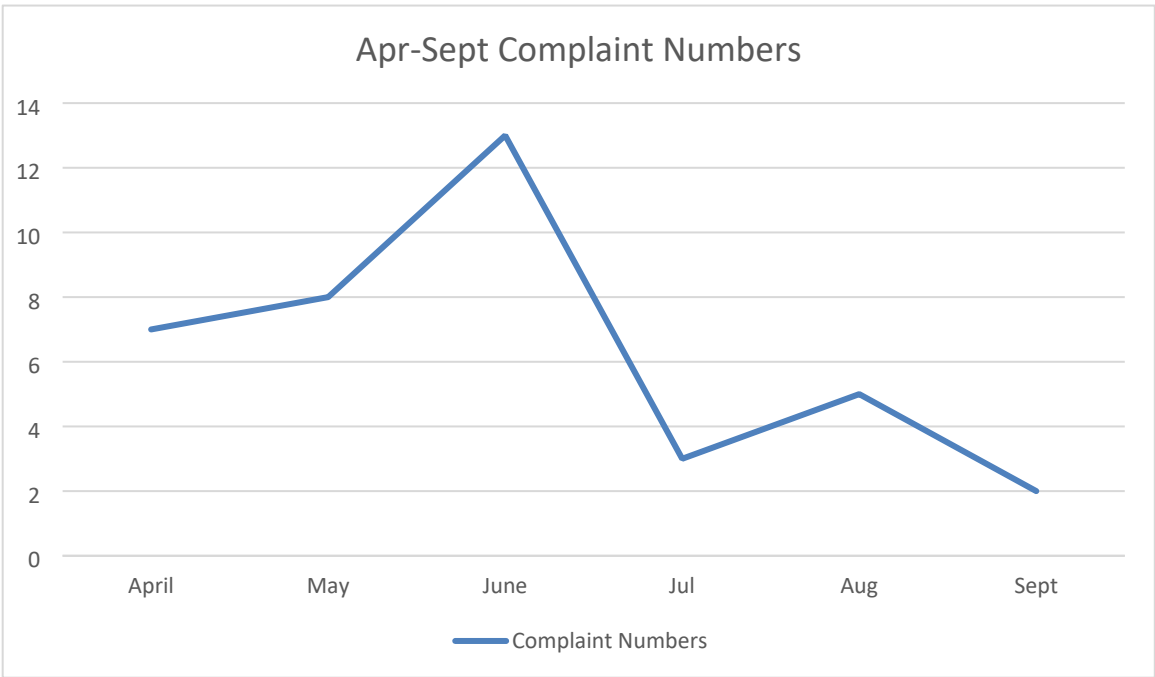
4. Analysis

4.1. Number of Complaints

Of the 10 complaints received in Q2 some related to the same incident i.e. multiple complaints regarding the same subject members and the same

alleged breach of the code of conduct. Taking this into account there were 9 separate ‘incidents’ complained about. The monthly totals of complaints received are set out in the following table. The number of complaints received in 24/25 Q2 represents a drop in the monthly average recorded in 23/24, from 5/month to closer to 3 but still within the realms of the volumes predicted prior to vesting day based on historical trends from the legacy councils.

Month	Number of Complaints
July	3
August	5 (4 incidents)
September	2



4.2. Acknowledgment

The Council’s target to provide an acknowledgement of received complaints is 5 working days. After quarter two the Council achieved this target 100% of the time.

4.3. Substantive Response

The Council’s target to provide a substantive response to a Code of Conduct complaint is 20 working days from the receipt of the complaint. In quarter two the Council achieved this target 80% of the time i.e. on 8 out of 10 occasions (1 complaints remain under consideration and within time at the time of report production). This represents a significant improvement on the Q1 performance which was 54%. The reasons for regularly failing to meet this target are more

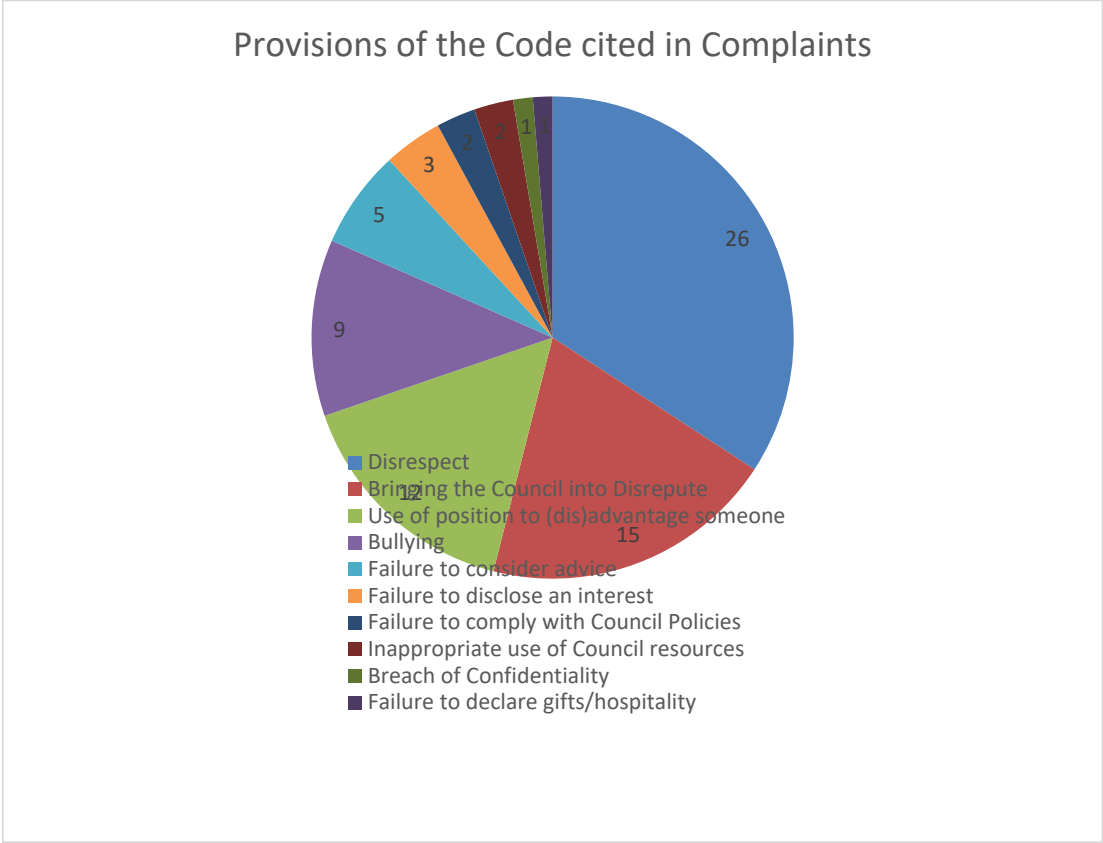
complex as the timings are not wholly within the Council’s control. The initial assessment period could require further information to be submitted by the complainant or a detailed response to be provided by the subject member and every proposed response has to be shared with the Independent Person.

The monthly summaries distributed to Committee Members will provide the reason for any delay which results in a failure to meet response time targets.

4.4. Trends and Themes

Of the 10 complaints received 7 (70%) were assessed and concluded No Further Action was required, 2 concluded with a local resolution and 1 is still under consideration.

The following table lists the areas of the code that were alleged to have been breached in the complaints for 2024/2025, in many cases more than one potential breach was cited.



4.5. Source of Complaints

Of the 10 complaints received in Q2, 5 originated from staff members in the subject councillors Council, 3 were from fellow Councillors and 2 were from members of the public. Taking Q1 and Q2 together the totals are 6 from members of staff, 17 from members of the public and 14 from fellow Councillors.

4.6. Upheld Complaints

Seven 2024/2025 complaints have been upheld or partially upheld, this represents 19% of all complaints submitted with one still under assessment. Of these seven, one has been referred for an investigation, 4 have been concluded through a local resolution of training and 2 have concluded through a local resolution of an apology.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** This is the second 2024/2025 code of conduct complaints report that has been brought before the Committee. The committee may wish to indicate what additional or alternative data they would consider valuable.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** Somerset Council Code of Conduct.
Somerset Council Code of Conduct Complaints form and guidance

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.

Appendix 1

April to Sept Code of Conduct Complaints Summary