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# Standards Committee

Wednesday, 26th July, 2023 at 5.30 pm

Room 14, First Floor, Parkside, Chart Way, Horsham

Councillors: Tony Bevis (Chairman)  
Belinda Walters (Vice-Chairman)  
Mark Baynham  
Joan Grech  
Lynn Lambert

David Skipp  
Tricia Youtan

## Co-opted advisory members

John Donaldson  
Michael Rumble  
Stephen Watkins

Independent Person  
Independent Person  
Parish Council Representative

You are summoned to the meeting to transact the following business

Jane Eaton  
Chief Executive

## Agenda

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	Page No.
1. <b>Apologies for absence</b>	
2. <b>Minutes</b>	3 - 8
To approve as correct the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March and 24 May 2023. (Note: If any Member wishes to propose an amendment to the minutes they should submit this in writing to <a href="mailto:committeeservices@horsham.gov.uk">committeeservices@horsham.gov.uk</a> at least 24 hours before the meeting. Where applicable, the audio recording of the meeting will be checked to ensure the accuracy of the proposed amendment.)	
3. <b>Declarations of Members' Interests</b>	
To receive any declarations of interest from Members of the Committee	
4. <b>Announcements</b>	
To receive any announcements from the Chairman of the Committee, the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer	
5. <b>Standards Update</b>	9 - 42
To consider the report from the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	

6. **Steyning Parish Council - Review Support & Recommendations**

43 - 56

To consider the report from the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

7. **Urgent Business**

Items not on the agenda which the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as urgent because of the special circumstances

**Standards Committee**  
**15 MARCH 2023**

Present: Councillors: Diana van der Klugt (Chairman), Joan Grech, Kate Rowbottom, David Skipp, Belinda Walters, John Donaldson, Michael Rumble, Philip Baxter and Stephen Watkins

Apologies: Councillors: Peter Burgess and Tricia Youtan

SC/18 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/19 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/20 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

SC/21 **STANDARDS UPDATE**

The Legal Services Business Manager updated the committee on Standards complaint cases.

Comparative data was provided, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 there was a total of 33 Code of Conduct complaints. 26 complaints related to Steyning Parish Council (80%), three related to Horsham District Councillors, two related to West Chiltington Parish Council and one related to both Henfield and Nuthurst Parish Councils.

From 1 April 2022 through to 15 March 2023 there had been a total of 21 Code of Conduct complaints. 14 related to Steyning Parish Council (66%), four related to Horsham District Councillors, and Nuthurst, Pulborough and Storrington Parish Councils each received a complaint.

Of those seven cases not related to Steyning Parish Council and following assessment and consultation with the Independent Person, no further action was required in six of the cases. One case was satisfactorily dealt with by informal resolution that included a meeting with the parties and Monitoring Officer without further action necessary.

Of the 14 Steyning Parish Council complaints this year, 10 were Councillor to Councillor complaints and 4 related to members of the public against Councillor complaints including an ex- councillor complaining.

The committee were advised that three complaints were received during the Hoey Ainscough process in August/September 2022 and dealt with by way of informal resolution.

A further eight complaints were received shortly after the publication of the Hoey Ainscough report in November/December 2022 and after Steyning Parish Council resolved to accept the report and implementation plan.

Three complaints have been received since January 2023, after assessment and consultation with the Independent Person, one complaint required no further action and two have been recently received and require further assessment.

The committee were positive that complaints had reduced since last year relating to Steyning Parish Council however acknowledged the review from Hoey Ainscough was taking place during this time. It was also noted that the amount of complaints received from Steyning Parish Council was still disproportionately high.

SC/22 **STEYNING PARISH COUNCIL - REVIEW SUPPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Chairman provided the Committee with a brief overview and update on Steyning Parish Council.

The Committee were reminded that it was agreed at Standards Committee in March 2022 to commission Hoey Ainscough Associates to undertake a review at Steyning Parish Council due to the vast increase over the last 3 years of code of conduct complaints received by Horsham District Council of which 70% related to Steyning Parish Council.

Six main areas were considered at the review and during a Parish Council meeting in September, 36 recommendations were set out and an action plan to address issues. A Draft Implementation Plan was completed and agreed at a Steyning Council meeting on 21 November as well as agreement to sign up to the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge.

Progress on implementation of the plan will be reported to Horsham District Council in approximately six months and 12 months. The Chairman advised that progress was being carefully monitored.

The Interim Monitoring Officer verbally updated the committee on the current situation and contents of the report presented to committee.

Since the publication of the Hoey & Ainscough report and adoption of the Implementation Plan in November 2022, 11 code of conduct complaints had been received from Steyning Parish Council. It appeared that some Councillors did not consider the comments contained in the report referred to them or recommendations applied to them.

Several meetings had taken place between Steyning Parish Council, the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person to assess complaints, meet the complainants and encourage engagement in the process and adopted plan. Most parties involved in outstanding complaints still requested formal investigation, determination and sanctions applied.

Members acknowledged that even though the implementation plan was still in its early stages it was possibly not working and complaints were continuing to be made. It was strongly felt that Steyning Parish Council was still taking up an extraordinary amount of Officer time and resource and unless the situation improved, harsher sanctions would need to be considered moving forward.

The Committee also discussed if a Vexatious Behaviour Policy would provide further support in the future. As part of Steyning Parish Council's Implementation Plan it was suggested that a new policy include vexatious behaviour and an update would be provided at a future meeting.

#### RESOLVED

The Standards Committee therefore approved the recommendations set out in the report, subject to an amendment to point (iii). It was proposed and seconded to revise the date in point (iii) from 6 May 2023 to 14 June 2023.

The Standards Committee recommended:

- i) To approve that the Standards Team continues to support Steyning Parish Council in implementing its plan to tackle issues, which was recommended by the Hoey & Ainscough intervention;
- ii) To approve that all outstanding Steyning Parish Council code of conduct complaints are dealt with by way of informal resolution (as opposed to formal investigation) and to give effect to the Hoey & Ainscough intervention; and
- iii) To approve that any new Steyning Parish Council code of conduct complaints received from 15 March 2023 up to 14 June 2023 are reviewed to assess the seriousness of any alleged breaches and are dealt with by way of informal resolution, unless the facts and evidence demonstrate that a formal investigation is warranted.

#### SC/23 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

*The meeting closed at 11.35 am having commenced at 10.00 am*

CHAIRMAN

**Standards Committee**  
**24 MAY 2023**

Present: Councillors: Mark Baynham, Joan Grech, Roger Noel, David Skipp and Belinda Walters

Apologies: Councillors: Tony Bevis and Tricia Youtan  
Not required: Independent Persons: John Donaldson and Michael Rumble  
Parish Council Representative: Stephen Watkins

SC/1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED

That Councillor Tony Bevis be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

SC/2 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED

That Councillor Belinda Walters be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

SC/3 **TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED

That meetings of the Committee be held at 5.30pm for the ensuing municipal year.

*The meeting closed at 7.00 pm having commenced at 6.57 pm*

**CHAIRMAN**

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## Report to Standards Committee

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023

By Lauren Kelly, Head of Legal & Democratic Services  
& Monitoring Officer



**Horsham  
District  
Council**

### **DECISION REQUIRED**

Not Exempt

## **Standards Update (July 2023)**

### **Executive Summary**

This report is to: (i) provide members to the Standards Committee with a general update in relation to (a) Code of Conduct complaints, and, (b) the Standard Committee's composition, and, (ii) seek approval to the amendments to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the matters set out in this report;
2. Subject to the approval of Cabinet, approve the amendments to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure;
3. Recommend to Cabinet the approval of the amendments to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- (i) To ensure that members to the Standards Committee (i) are appraised of code of conduct complaints, (ii) approve revisions to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure, and, (iii) note the position in relation to the Independent Persons and Parish Representatives; and
- (ii) To promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst members.

### **Background Papers**

The Localism Act 2011

**Wards affected:**

ALL

**Contact:** Lauren Kelly, Head of Legal & Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer

01403 215435

## Background Information

### 1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to: (i) provide members to the Standards Committee with a general update in relation to (a) Code of Conduct complaints, and, (b) the Standard Committee's composition, and, (ii) seek approval to the amendments to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure.

### 2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 Chapter 7 of Part I of the Localism Act 2011 makes provisions in relation to the standards regime.

### 3 Details

#### (A)Code of Conduct Complaints - update

- 3.1 During the last financial year, from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 there was a total of twenty-two code of conduct complaints received by the Monitoring Officer.

These complaints constituted official written complaints with the completion of the required complaints form detailing alleged breaches of the code of conduct.

The breakdown of the code of conduct complaints between the District and Parish Councils are detailed below:

#### 2022 / 2023

Steyning Parish Council –	14
Horsham District Council -	4
Nuthurst Parish Council -	1
Pulborough Parish Council -	1
Storrington & Sullington Parish Council	1
Shipley Parish Council -	1

- 3.2 This financial year (since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023) we have received nineteen code of conduct complaints all ready.

The breakdown of the Code of Conduct complaints between the District and Parish Councils are detailed below:

#### 2023 / 2024

Steyning Parish Council –	11
Horsham District Council -	1
Pulborough Parish Council -	3
Nuthurst Parish Council -	1
Storrington & Sullington Parish Council	1
Cowfold Parish Council -	1

Out of these nineteen complaints (which were received in just over a three-month period), ten have been assessed by the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person and it has been decided that either no breach or no further action should be taken.

Three cases have been assessed and dealt with by informal resolution and these relate to Steyning Parish Council.

Of these nineteen complaints, six have been received relatively recently and are presently being assessed by the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person.

### **(B)Amendments to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure**

- 3.3 The Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure was revised in December 2021 when the Council adopted the new amended model Code of Conduct for councillors. The procedure was streamlined, and this has made it easier to deal with code of conduct complaints in a clearer and more transparent manner. However, owing to the volume of work experienced by the Standards Team, it is considered appropriate to incorporate some minor amendments to the procedure.
- 3.4 The procedure presently allows Deputy Monitoring Officers to deal with standards related matters only in the absence of the Monitoring Officer. The suggested revisions will allow the Monitoring Officer to delegate all standards related work to nominated deputies at any time and not just during periods of absence. This delegation is considered necessary owing to the volume of standard work that is presently being generated by parish councils throughout the District.
- 3.5 A further revision has been incorporated to allow the Monitoring Officer to vary the procedure when it is considered appropriate and desirable to do so. This will provide the Monitoring Officer and Standards Team with a greater degree of flexibility when dealing with code of conduct complaints.
- 3.6 The remaining revisions constitute minor adjustments and all amendments are contained in Annex A to this report and are shown as tracked changes. Accordingly, the Standards Committee is asked to approve the amendments to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure.

### **(C)Independent Persons & Parish Representatives**

- 3.7 The Standards Committee is required to have two Independent Persons and two Parish Representatives.
- 3.8 We currently have two current Independent Persons on the Standards Committee - John Donaldson and Mike Rumble and we have one Parish Representative - Stephen Watkins.
- 3.9 Therefore, the Standards Committee presently has one vacant Parish Representative post owing to Parish Councillor Philip Baxter's retirement in the May 2023 election. Accordingly, the Horsham Association of Local Councils is working with the Monitoring Officer and will nominate candidate(s) to fill this vacancy in the not-too-distant future.

## **4 Next Steps**

4.1 The Committee is asked to approve the recommendations contained in this report.

## **5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations**

5.1 Not applicable.

## **6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected**

6.1 None.

## **7 Resource Consequences**

7.1 None.

## **8 Legal Considerations and Implications**

8.1 The Council has a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. In addition, it must have arrangements in place to deal effectively with conduct of conduct complaints. Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 refers.

## **9 Risk Assessment**

9.1 There is no one particular risk associated with the recommendations contained in this report.

## **10 Procurement implications**

10.1 There are no procurement implications stemming from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

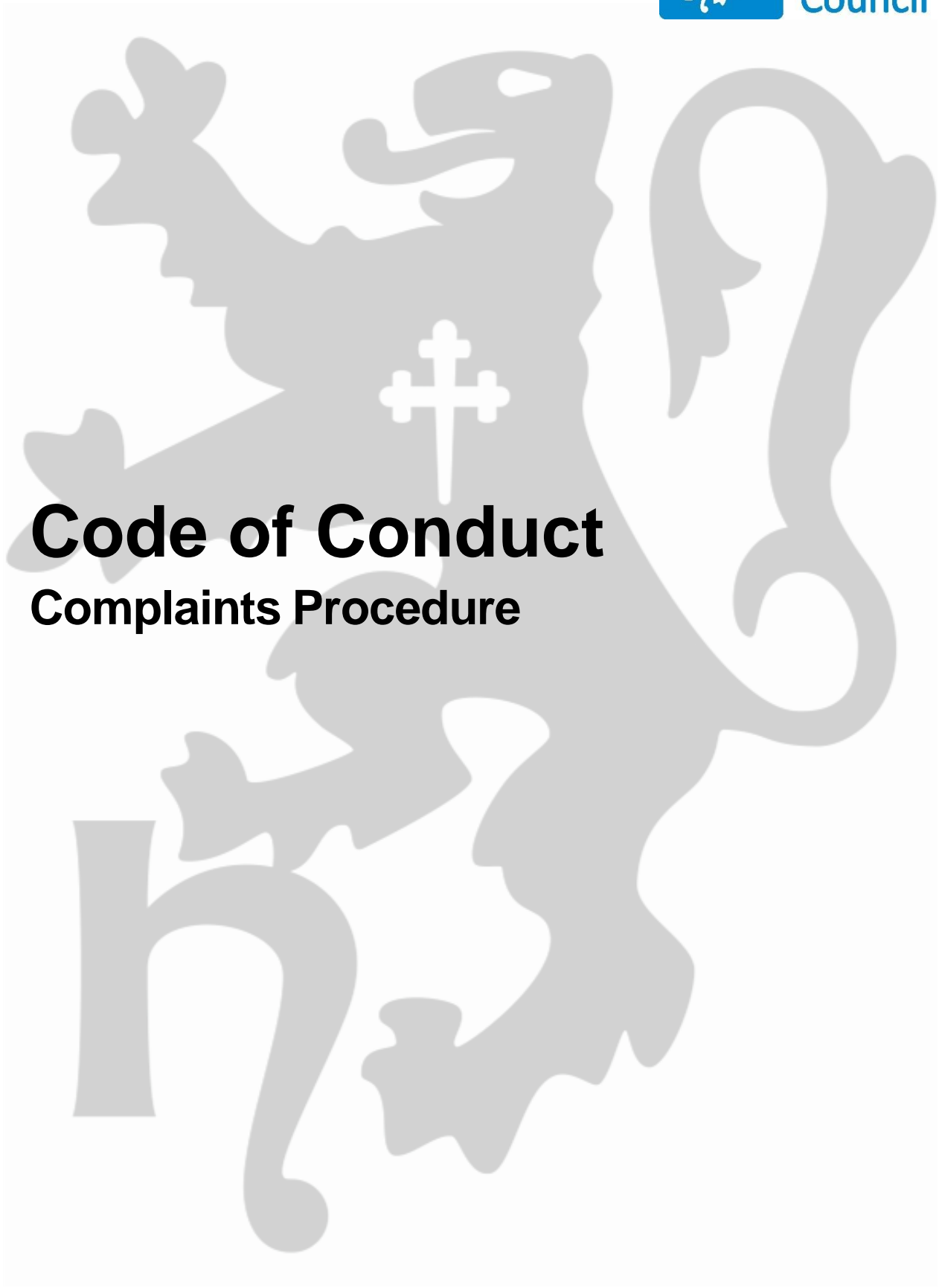
11.1 There is no detrimental impact on any group. A full Equalities Impact Assessment is not considered appropriate or necessary.

## **12 Environmental Implications**

12.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **13 Other Considerations**

- 13.1 There are no GDPR, Data Protection or Crime & Disorder consequences associated with the recommendations contained in this report.



# Code of Conduct

## Complaints Procedure

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## The Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure:

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to explain:
- (1) how you can make a Code of Conduct complaint (a Complaint) to Horsham District Council (the Council) about a Horsham District Councillor or a Parish Councillor or a Neighbourhood Councillor or a person co-opted onto a District or Parish or Neighbourhood Council Committee as a member and
  - (2) the process which the Council will follow for dealing with the Complaint.
- 1.2 The Council is required by law to have in place arrangements under which an allegation that a Councillor has failed to comply with the relevant Code of Conduct can be investigated and a decision made about such allegation.
- 1.3 The Council is also required by law to appoint at least one Independent Person, whose views must be sought and taken into account before it makes a decision on an allegation which it has decided to investigate. In addition, the views of the Independent Person may be sought by the Council at any other stage, or by a District, Parish or Neighbourhood Councillor or co-opted member against whom an allegation has been made. The Council will endeavour to appoint two Independent Persons whose appointment must be approved by the majority of the members of the Council.
- 1.4 The arrangements and procedures for making a Complaint and the procedure and guidance to be followed upon receipt by the Monitoring Officer of a Complaint are set out in sections 2 to 9 and the Appendices to this document.
- 1.5 The arrangements and procedures for handling a Complaint are dealt with by the Monitoring Officer, who is a senior officer of the Council. The Monitoring Officer may allocate any complaint, and any other standards related matters, to a Deputy Monitoring Officer to deal with, who will have equal responsibility for administering the arrangements. In the absence of the Monitoring Officer, a Deputy Monitoring Officer may deal with all standards matters. Any reference to the Monitoring Officer in this document includes any Deputy Monitoring Officer. will have responsibility for administering the arrangements.
- 1.6 The relevant Code of Conduct, in the case of a Complaint against a Horsham District Councillor or co-opted member, will be the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council. In the case of a Complaint against a Parish or Neighbourhood Councillor or co-opted member, it will be the Code of Conduct adopted by that Parish or

Neighbourhood Council. In this document the person making the Complaint will be referred to as the Complainant and the District or Parish or Neighbourhood Councillor or co-opted member who is the subject of the Complaint will be referred to as the Subject Member.

## **2. How to make a Complaint**

2.1 If you believe there has been a breach by a Subject Member of the relevant Code of Conduct and wish to make a Complaint you will need to fill out the Council's Code of Conduct Complaints Form and return it to the Council's Monitoring Officer. You can find a copy of the Council's Code of Conduct Complaints Form at Appendix A to this document. You can complete the form either online here (<https://www.horsham.gov.uk/codeofconductcomplaint>) or send a copy via email or post. You can also request a form by contacting the Council's Monitoring Officer/Standards Team at [standards@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:standards@horsham.gov.uk).

2.2 When completing the Complaints Form you should answer all sections, clearly identify the relevant Code of Conduct and state what section or sections of the Code is/are alleged to have been breached and why. Your explanation is limited to two sides of A4 to facilitate assessment. Evidence to support the Complaint should be provided and cross-referenced to the specific allegation. The information and detail in the Complaints Form should be clear and concise. If the case is referred for Formal Investigation you may be given the opportunity to provide more information and detail. If recordings of meetings are submitted as evidence, then a copy of the recording or a link to an official recording should be provided. The relevant timings contained in the recording should be given and cross-referenced to the specific allegations. It is important that the Complainant does not just refer to documents and/or recordings with general allegations. All evidence should cross-refer to specific allegations and should be presented clearly. It is not the Monitoring Officer's responsibility to interpret what the Complaint is about. Please do not make purely politically motivated, malicious, vexatious, or tit for tat complaints as they will be rejected.

2.3 A Complaint should be made as soon as possible and, in any event, no later than 28 days after the incident complained about. A Complaint received after the 28 day period will not be processed or dealt with unless exceptional circumstances can be shown.

2.4 We ask you to provide your name and contact details on the Complaints Form, so that we can acknowledge receipt of your Complaint as well as keep you informed of its progress. This also guards against malicious complaints. We will only use the information you provide for the purposes of dealing with your Complaint. The

Council does not accept complaints that are submitted anonymously, unless, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, there is an overriding public interest reason to do so and there are extreme circumstances that might justify this.

2.5 Your contact details will not normally be shared unless it is essential for the handling of the Complaint. For example, knowing your address could be important to understanding the context of the Complaint.

2.6 In the interests of fairness and openness and in compliance with the rules of natural justice, we believe that a Subject Member who has had a Complaint made against them has a right to know who has made the Complaint and the substance and detail of the allegations made against them unless there are exceptional circumstances (see section 2.10).

2.7 During the course of dealing with the Complaint, the Monitoring Officer will normally only share information about your name and details of the Complaint with:

- the Subject Member;
- the Standards Team at the Council;
- the Independent Person(s) and Parish Representative (if applicable) who advise on the handling of complaints;
- the Parish or Neighbourhood Clerk if the Subject Member is a member of a Parish or Neighbourhood Council;
- any Investigating Officer appointed to deal with the case;
- members of any Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council who are handling the case;
- any witnesses to the allegations where that is necessary to enable a proper investigation.

However, there may be occasions where such information will be shared with others if it is felt necessary and appropriate to do so. The information may also be published in a Decision Notice following Formal Investigation (see section 2.9) or on earlier publication of details of the Complaint (see section 2.12).

2.8 We may be required or permitted, under data protection legislation, to disclose your personal data without your explicit consent. For example, we may have a legal obligation to do so, such as in relation to law enforcement, regulation and licensing, criminal prosecutions, and court proceedings.

2.9 You should also note that if your Complaint is formally investigated and results in a Decision Notice from the Standards Committee or Sub-Committee your name and details of the Complaint may be published in that notice and this would mean that your name and details of the Complaint could be in the public domain. By

completing the Complaints Form you give permission for your name and details of the Complaint to be included in any Decision Notice that may be published in due course, or as detailed in 2.12, unless there are exceptional circumstances (see section 2.10).

2.10 The exceptional circumstances referred to in sections 2.6 and 2.9 are those where to disclose the identity of the Complainant would be contrary to the public interest or would prejudice investigation of the Complaint and may include, for example: -

- where you have a reasonable belief that you may be victimised or harassed by the Subject Member (or by a person associated with the Subject Member); or
- where you have a reasonable belief that your personal security may be at risk; or
- where you have a reasonable belief that you may receive less favourable treatment from the Council because of the seniority of the Subject Member in relation to any existing Council service provision or any tender/contract that you may have or are about to submit to the Council; or
- you are an officer who works closely with the Subject Member and have a reasonable belief that you may be adversely affected in your employment if your identity is disclosed.

2.11 The identity of the Subject Member who is the subject of the Complaint should remain confidential during the complaints process, subject to 2.12, unless or until there has been a determination of a breach of the relevant Code of Conduct. This is vital to ensure that the Complaint is not prejudiced. Therefore, you should not divulge the identity of the Subject Member nor the nature of the Complaint to the public whilst the Complaint is being dealt with.

The Subject Member should also maintain privacy and confidentiality, particularly in relation to the Complainant's details whilst the Complaint is being dealt with. The Complainant and Subject Member should not make direct contact with each other regarding the Complaint unless authorised to do so by the Monitoring Officer.

2.12 If it is in the public interest and appropriate, details of the Complaint may be published after Assessment or during Informal Resolution. This will be at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, Standards Committee or Sub-Committee.

If the matter proceeds to Formal Investigation and a Standards Committee or Sub-Committee is convened to determine it, then the relevant Committee or Sub-Committee will be held and the Decision Notice will be published on the Council's website unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so. This will be at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, Standards Committee or Sub-Committee.

2.13 Your details will be held for 3 years after the Complaint has been dealt with and closed.

## Complaints procedure:

### **3. Initial check of the Complaints Form**

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer receives the completed Complaints Form and accompanying evidence from the Complainant and, following an initial review, may ask for some clarification. If the Complaints Form has not been filled in correctly or there is information missing or it does not comply with sections 2.2 or 2.3, the Complaint may be rejected. In such event, the Complainant will be given the reasons for rejection of the Complaint. The Complainant may be given the opportunity to correct and resubmit the form depending on the circumstances.
- 3.2 If the Complaint does not fall within the scope of the relevant Code of Conduct, the Complaint will be rejected, and the Complainant will be notified.
- 3.3 If the Complaint identifies potential criminal conduct or breach of other statutory regulations, the Monitoring Officer may refer the matter to the Police or other regulatory body.
- 3.4 If at any time at the outset or during Assessment, ~~Informal Local~~ Resolution or Formal Investigation the Monitoring Officer or Investigating Officer identifies any potential breach of criminal law or other statutory regulations by any individual, they may refer the matter to the Police or other regulatory body.
- 3.5 If the Complaint appears to be within the scope of the Code of Conduct and the Complaints Form has been correctly completed and satisfactory information and detail provided, the Complaint will be processed.

### **4. Processing the Complaint**

- 4.1 Upon receipt of a satisfactory Complaints Form, the Monitoring Officer will open a complaints case, allocate to it a unique reference, and inform and provide details of the Complaint to the Subject Member. They will also acknowledge receipt to the Complainant. They will also inform the Parish or Neighbourhood Clerk of the Complaint, if the Complaint is about a Parish or Neighbourhood Councillor or co-opted member of a Parish or Neighbourhood Council Committee. Where possible this will be done within 7 working days of receipt of a satisfactory Complaints Form.
- 4.2 At this stage the Monitoring Officer may offer the Subject Member the opportunity to submit a response to the Complaint. In the interests of fairness, the

Subject Member will be given the same limit of two sides of A4 pages as the Complainant to set out their response.

4.3 Alternatively, the Monitoring Officer may decide to move to Assessment without the need for a response at this stage, depending on the circumstances of the case. If appropriate, the Subject Member will be given the opportunity to respond in more detail following Assessment at the start of either ~~Local~~-Informal Resolution or Formal Investigation.

4.4 The Monitoring Officer has complete discretion as to whether to accept a code of conduct complaint or a response that does not strictly comply with these procedures.

## **6.5. Assessment**

5.1 The Monitoring Officer in consultation with an appointed Independent Person will fully assess the Complaint on the papers and evidence provided. Further information and detail may be requested and other enquiries made if necessary. The Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person or Standards Committee or Sub- Committee will decide upon one of the following courses of action:

- i. there has been no breach of the Code of Conduct. In such event the Complainant and Subject Member will be informed of the outcome and given reasons;
- ii. there has been no breach of the Code of Conduct but there appears to be a potential breach of criminal law or other statutory regulation. In such event:
  - The Subject Member and Complainant will be informed of the outcome and given reasons; and
  - The matter will be referred to the Police or other regulatory body;
- iii. no further action will be taken (see section 6);
- iv. it is possible that there may have been a breach of the Code of Conduct, but further investigation and evidence are necessary to make that determination. However, rather than commencing Formal Investigation, if the Subject Member agrees to undertake Informal Resolution (see section 7), the Complaint may be resolved without a determination;
- v. it has been determined that there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct and the decision is to undertake Informal Resolution (see section 7) without the need for Formal Investigation;

- vi. there is some other reason why Informal Resolution (see section 7) should be undertaken;
- vii. to carry out a Formal Investigation (see section 8);
- viii. to take any other appropriate action in the circumstances;
- ix. to refer the matter to the Standards Committee or Sub-Committee for it to decide which of the above options is most appropriate.

5.2 So far as is reasonably practicable, the Monitoring Officer aims to complete Assessment and notify the Complainant and Subject Member as to the relevant course of action within two months from the date of receipt of a satisfactory Complaints Form.

5.3 In cases where a Complaint is made against a Parish or Neighbourhood Councillor or person co-opted onto a Parish or Neighbourhood Council Committee as a member, the Monitoring Officer or Investigating Officer may also consult a Parish Representative, if considered necessary, at any time during Assessment, Informal Resolution, or Formal Investigation to obtain their views and may also involve and liaise with the relevant Parish or Neighbourhood Clerk if appropriate.

5.4 No officer or member of the Council or Independent Person or Parish Representative will be permitted to participate in any stage of the procedure if they have a conflict of interest in the matter. Where the Monitoring Officer has a conflict of interest in the matter, or there is any other good reason, the Monitoring Officer may appoint a deputy to act or may ask a Monitoring Officer from a different authority to undertake any stage of the process detailed in this document.

## **7.6. No further action**

6.1 At Assessment, the Monitoring Officer (in consultation with the Independent Person) or Standards Committee or Sub-Committee may consider that:

- A. on the information provided and after assessment of the Complaint there is no clear evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct, or it is unlikely that a breach will be determined in the circumstances;
- B. the Complaint is insufficiently serious to warrant further action being taken;
- C. the Complaint appears to be purely politically motivated, malicious, vexatious, or tit for tat;
- D. the Complaint (or a similar Complaint about the same event) has previously been considered by the Council or another body with investigatory functions i.e. the issue has already been dealt with;
- E. the Subject Member is no longer a member of the authority concerned or no longer holds the position from which the Complaint arises;



- F. the alleged conduct occurred too long ago to warrant further action being taken or for the information to be considered reliable;
- G. the Subject Member was acting in a personal capacity at the time of the alleged breach of the Code of Conduct;
- H. it is not in the public interest to pursue the Complaint (See Appendix C);
- I. there is some other reason to take no further action.

6.2 In any of the above circumstances, the Monitoring Officer may dismiss the Complaint and take no further action. The Monitoring Officer will inform the Complainant and Subject Member that no action will be taken and the reasons for the decision. The Complaint is closed.

### **8.7. Informal Resolution**

7.1 At Assessment, the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person, or Standards Committee or Sub-Committee may consider that Informal Resolution should be undertaken (see section 5.1 (iv) to (vi)).

7.2 Informal Resolution can take any form as agreed with the Independent Person, including but not limited to the following:

- A. the issue of an apology by the Subject Member;
- B. the issue of an explanation by the Subject Member;
- C. a personal undertaking from the Subject Member regarding future conduct;
- D. clarification or rectification of the matter giving rise to the Complaint;
- E. the requirement for the Subject Member to undertake specified training;
- F. a form of dispute resolution would be appropriate to resolve an underlying issue or ongoing dispute. If the parties to the dispute are within a Parish or Neighbourhood Council, the recommendation may be to the Parish or Neighbourhood Council to engage a mediator at its own expense;
- G. a recommendation to introduce or amend policy or procedure so as to avoid circumstances giving rise to a similar Complaint in the future.

#### **Procedure for Informal Resolution:**

7.3 The Monitoring Officer informs the Complainant and Subject Member of the Informal Resolution and the reasons for this decision and specifies the action required to close the Complaint and the timescale in which the action must be taken. So far as is reasonably practicable, the aim is to have achieved Informal Resolution within one month of completion of Assessment.

- 7.4 If the requested action is taken within the prescribed timescale, the Complaint is closed and the Monitoring Officer provides written confirmation to the Complainant and Subject Member.
- 7.5 If the Subject Member does not take the requested action within the prescribed timescale, the Monitoring Officer will consult the Independent Person again and decide on one of the following courses of action or any other appropriate action:
- A. the potential breach is not serious enough to warrant further action, or there is any other reason why there should be no further action. In such case, the Monitoring Officer closes the Complaint and gives reasons to the Subject Member and Complainant;
  - B. to attempt a different form of Informal Resolution;
  - C. to proceed with Formal Investigation into the potential breach (section 8);
  - D. if there are exceptional circumstances, to give the Subject Member an extension of time to comply.
- 7.6 If the Informal Resolution requires the co-operation of the Complainant and the Complainant declines to co-operate within a prescribed period, then the Monitoring Officer may decide to pursue a different form of Informal Resolution or close the Complaint following further consultation with the Independent Person.

## **9.8. Formal Investigation**

- 8.1 At Assessment, the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person, or Standards Committee or Sub-Committee may consider that:
- A. the Complaint raises issues of bullying, misuse of position, breach of confidentiality or other allegation of a serious breach of the Code of Conduct;
  - B. the Complaint is by or involves a member of staff which ought to be investigated by reason of the nature of the Complaint or in the interests of transparency;
  - C. other forms of action have been tried without a satisfactory outcome and the nature of the Complaint is sufficiently serious to warrant Formal Investigation;
  - D. there has been a history of similar complaints against the Subject Member and the nature of the Complaint is sufficiently serious to warrant Formal Investigation;
  - E. it is in the public interest to carry out a Formal Investigation into the alleged breach of the Code of Conduct (see Appendix C);
  - F. there is some other reason why a Formal Investigation is appropriate.
- 8.2 In any of the above circumstances the Monitoring Officer may pursue a Formal Investigation.

### Procedure for Formal Investigation and Determination:

8.3 The Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person will appoint an Investigating Officer who may be the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer or other appropriate person either within or outside the Council, to investigate the alleged breach and will provide their details to the Subject Member and Complainant. The name and contact details of the Independent Person will also be given to the Subject Member who has the right to consult the Independent Person during the investigation process.

The Investigating Officer may then invite the Subject Member and Complainant to submit additional supporting information. The Investigating Officer has complete discretion as to how to conduct and proceed with the investigation including but not limited to:

- interviewing the Complainant;
- interviewing the Subject Member;
- interviewing witnesses;
- requesting copies of documents and/or recordings relating to the investigation.

Both the Complainant and Subject Member should comply with all such requests from the Investigating Officer.

8.4 The Investigating Officer will collate all evidence, responses and any other information relating to the Complaint that could reasonably assist in its determination. This may include documents, interviews, statements, recordings, and any other information the Investigating Officer deems relevant. An information/evidence bundle will be prepared.

8.5 When complete the information/evidence bundle will be submitted to the Independent Person for consideration and response. It may also be submitted to the Parish Representative in Parish or Neighbourhood Councillor or co-opted Parish or Neighbourhood Council Committee member cases, if it is considered appropriate. The Independent Person (and Parish Representative if involved) will be invited in respect of each Complaint to identify whether they consider that the alleged conduct amounts to a breach of the relevant Code of Conduct and to give their reasons for having reached that conclusion.

8.6 If the Investigating Officer and Independent Person (and Parish Representative if involved) agree that there is no breach of the Code of Conduct, the Complaint is referred back to the Monitoring Officer who will decide if no further action is to be taken or if the Complaint will still be referred to the Standards Sub-Committee for

review and determination. The Monitoring Officer will inform the Complainant and the Subject Member of the decision with reasons.

- 8.7 If the Investigating Officer, having considered the views of the Independent Person (and Parish Representative if involved), considers that a breach may have occurred or the Monitoring Officer decides the case should still be reviewed and determined by the Standards Sub-Committee, the Investigating Officer will prepare a draft report.

The draft report will clearly set out the allegations made by the Complainant, the relevant parts of the Code of Conduct alleged to have been breached and provide a statement of the Investigating Officer's findings of fact, referring where possible to the information/evidence bundle. The Independent Person's (and Parish Representative's if involved) views and comments will also be included, and the draft report will conclude as to whether or not the Subject Member may have failed to comply with the relevant Code of Conduct with reasons. It will also suggest the sanctions which may be appropriate. This draft report should state that the report does not represent the Investigating Officer's final findings. This draft report and accompanying information/evidence bundle will be sent to the Subject Member and Complainant (and any other relevant person if considered necessary) for their consideration and response within 14 days.

- 8.8 The Investigating Officer will consider any responses received and will produce a final report having taken them into account. The final report will be submitted to the Monitoring Officer who will organise a Standards Sub-Committee if appropriate to determine the Complaint. Generally, the Sub-Committee will determine the Complaint on the papers and the information/evidence bundle. Personal representation by the Complainant or Subject Member will not be allowed. However, if there are circumstances where the Monitoring Officer considers that personal testimony is required to reach a determination, then the Subject Member, Complainant and/or witnesses may be invited to attend a Sub-Committee for a hearing.

- 8.9 The Standards Sub-Committee will comprise usually three but a quorum of two Standards Committee Council members and an Independent Person as a non-voting member. The meeting will be attended by the Monitoring Officer, who will advise the Sub-Committee throughout, and by the Investigating Officer, who will present their report. If a hearing is deemed necessary where personal testimony is required, then those invited to attend will be informed by the Monitoring Officer of the process and procedure that will be followed at the Standards Sub-Committee.

8.10 The Standards Sub-Committee considers the report and all information and evidence to determine if there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct.

If the Standards Sub-Committee finds there has been no breach of the relevant Code of Conduct, the Complaint is dismissed.

If the Standards Sub-Committee finds there has been a breach of the relevant Code of Conduct, it will decide in consultation with the Independent Person on suitable sanction(s) if this is considered appropriate.

8.11 The Monitoring Officer will issue a Decision Notice which will include a brief statement of facts, the provisions of the Code of Conduct engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the decision and the reasoning for that decision, and any sanction(s) applied. The Decision Notice will be sent to the Subject Member, the Complainant and the Parish or Neighbourhood Clerk if necessary and will be published as soon as possible on the Council website as detailed in 2.12.

8.12 So far as is reasonably practicable, the aim is for the Formal Investigation and issue of a Decision Notice to be completed within six months from the date of receipt of a satisfactory Complaints Form.

~~8.13 There is no right of appeal for the Complainant or Subject Member against a decision of the Monitoring Officer, Standards Committee or Sub-Committee. If the Complainant considers that the Council has failed to deal with their Complaint properly, they can make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.~~

## **10.9. Sanctions**

9.1 If a breach of the Code of Conduct has been determined or the Subject Member agrees (see section 5.1 (iv)), all or any of the following sanctions may be applied:

- A. issue of a formal letter;
- B. issue of a formal reprimand by motion or otherwise;
- C. recommendation that the Subject Member be removed from any or all committees or sub-committees, cabinet or sub-committees of cabinet;
- D. restriction on the Subject Member's access to the premises of the relevant authority and the use by the Subject Member of the relevant authority's resources, provided that any such restrictions imposed upon the Subject Member are reasonable and proportionate to the nature of the breach and do

not unduly restrict the Subject Member's ability to perform his or her functions as a member;

- E. requirement that the Subject Member undertakes such training as may be specified and detailed;
- F. requirement that the Subject Member submits an apology in such form as may be specified and detailed;
- G. requirement that the Subject Member clarifies or revokes any previous statement as specified and detailed;
- H. requirement that the Subject Member takes part in conciliation or mediation as specified and detailed;
- I. provision of any relevant publicity in the form of a press release or otherwise;
- J. any other sanction which in consultation with the Independent Person is considered appropriate.

9.2 If any sanctions are applied that require the Subject Member's agreement or participation, such as training, conciliation, apology, or remedial action, and are not undertaken satisfactorily by the Subject Member within the specified time, then the matter may come back to the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee or Sub-Committee to consider any further sanctions, in consultation with the Independent Person.

9.3 Any decision to apply a sanction or sanctions relating to a Parish or Neighbourhood Councillor or to a person co-opted onto a Parish or Neighbourhood Council Committee will be in the form of a recommendation to the relevant Parish or Neighbourhood Council to apply the sanction or sanctions.

## 10. Miscellaneous

10.1 The Monitoring Officer may vary this procedure in any particular instance where he or she is of the opinion that such a variation is desirable and does not conflict with statutory requirements.

10.2 There is no right of appeal for the Complainant or Subject Member against any decision of the Monitoring Officer, Standards Committee or Sub-Committee. If the Complainant or Subject Member considers that the Council has failed to deal with their Complaint properly, they may make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

## Appendix A

### Code of Conduct Complaints Form

#### Instructions for completing this form

This form should only be used for Code of Conduct complaints against:

- (1) members of Horsham District Council  
or
- (2) members of parish councils or neighbourhood councils within Horsham District  
or
- (3) co-opted members of Horsham District Council committees or parish or neighbourhood council committees within Horsham District.

These are all referred to as "Subject Member" in this form.

Please read the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure before completing this form.

You can fill in the form online here: (<https://www.horsham.gov.uk/codeofconductcomplaint>) or alternatively fill in the form below and either e-mail it to [standards@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:standards@horsham.gov.uk) or post it to the Horsham District Council's Monitoring Officer at Parkside, Chart Way, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 1RL. If you are filling in a printed version of this form please use black ink as it photocopies better.

Please concentrate details of your Complaint into the spaces provided on this form. Do not attach **any** additional material other than as specified in Section 6 of the form as this will not be considered. If additional material is required by the Monitoring Officer or the Standards Committee or Sub-Committee, they will request it.

#### **A. Your details:**

1. Please provide us with your contact details:

<b>Title:</b>	
<b>First name:</b>	
<b>Last name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Contact telephone:</b>	
<b>Email address:</b>	
<b>Signature or E-Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

Note: your name and the details of your Complaint may be made public in accordance with Data Protection legislation and/or the procedural arrangements for dealing with a Complaint (see section 2 of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure).





2. Please tell us which Complainant type best describes you:

- Member of the public
- Council member or co-opted member of a council committee (please specify the council or committee of which you are an elected or co-opted member:\_\_\_\_\_)
- Independent member of a standards committee
- Parish council or neighbourhood council clerk
- Member of Parliament
- Monitoring Officer
- Other council employee, contractor, or agent
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**B. The details of your Complaint:**

3. Please provide us with the name of the Subject Member you believe has breached the relevant council's Councillor Code of Conduct. A separate form should be completed in relation to each Subject Member unless the complaints can appropriately be dealt with together: for example, the complaints arise from the same facts.

Title	First name	Last name	Specify Council

4. Please identify the relevant Councillor Code of Conduct and which particular section(s)/paragraph(s) of the Councillor Code of Conduct you believe has/have been breached:

5. *Please explain why you believe the particular section(s)/paragraph(s) of the Councillor Code of Conduct has/have been breached and state the date of the alleged breach/es:*

(Please use separate sheet(s) as necessary but restrict to 2 pages of A4)

6. *On the next sheet please provide any relevant background information/ documentary evidence to support your allegation(s). Please cross-refer any information / documentary evidence provided to your specific allegations and your reasons why you believe there is a breach.*

*The information should be clear and concise. If recordings of meetings are submitted as evidence, then a copy of the recording or a link to an official recording should be provided and the relevant timings of the recording should be detailed and cross- referenced to the specific allegations.*

*It is important that Complainants do not enclose documents and/or recordings without explaining how they relate to the allegations. It is not the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer to try to interpret what the Complaint is about.*

(Continue on separate sheet(s), as necessary)

7. Please identify any witnesses to the alleged conduct and provide their contact details if possible:

8. The Complaint must be made no later than 28 days after the incident complained about. If the Complaint is made more than 28 days after the incident, please explain why the Complaint was or could not be made within the 28 day period. A Complaint received more than 28 days after the incident will not be processed or dealt with unless exceptional circumstances can be shown.

**C. Fairness and Openness:**

9. In the interests of fairness and openness and in compliance with the rules of natural justice, we believe that a Subject Member who has had a Complaint made against them has a right to know who has made the Complaint and the substance of the allegation made against them unless there are exceptional circumstances (see sections 2.6 and 2.10 of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure).

*Do you consider that your name should not be disclosed to the Subject Member i.e. the person against whom you are complaining?*

Yes  No

*If yes, please explain your reason/s:*

#### **D. Check form:**

10. Have you:

- Completed all the sections on this form?
- Signed the form?
- Enclosed any relevant documents and recordings?

*If this Complaints Form is incomplete and/or does not satisfy the requirement of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure it may be rejected.*

#### **E. What happens next:**

11. When you have completed this Complaints Form please send it by email to: [standards@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:standards@horsham.gov.uk)

or by post to:

Monitoring Officer (Standards)  
Horsham District Council  
Parkside, Chart Way,  
Horsham, West Sussex  
RH12 1RL

*If this Complaints Form has been satisfactorily completed, the Complaint will be considered in accordance with the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure. You will be kept informed of progress of the Complaint and of the outcome.*

#### **F. Help:**

12. The procedures for assessing complaints by way of allegations against a Subject Member and for subsequently handling such allegations are regulated by the Localism Act 2011 and any regulations made thereunder by the Secretary of State. Horsham District Council's Procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints can also be found online.

13. Complaints must be submitted in writing using this form, preferably electronically or using the e-form, and are assessed on the basis of the information supplied by you. It is, therefore, important that the information is full and complete.

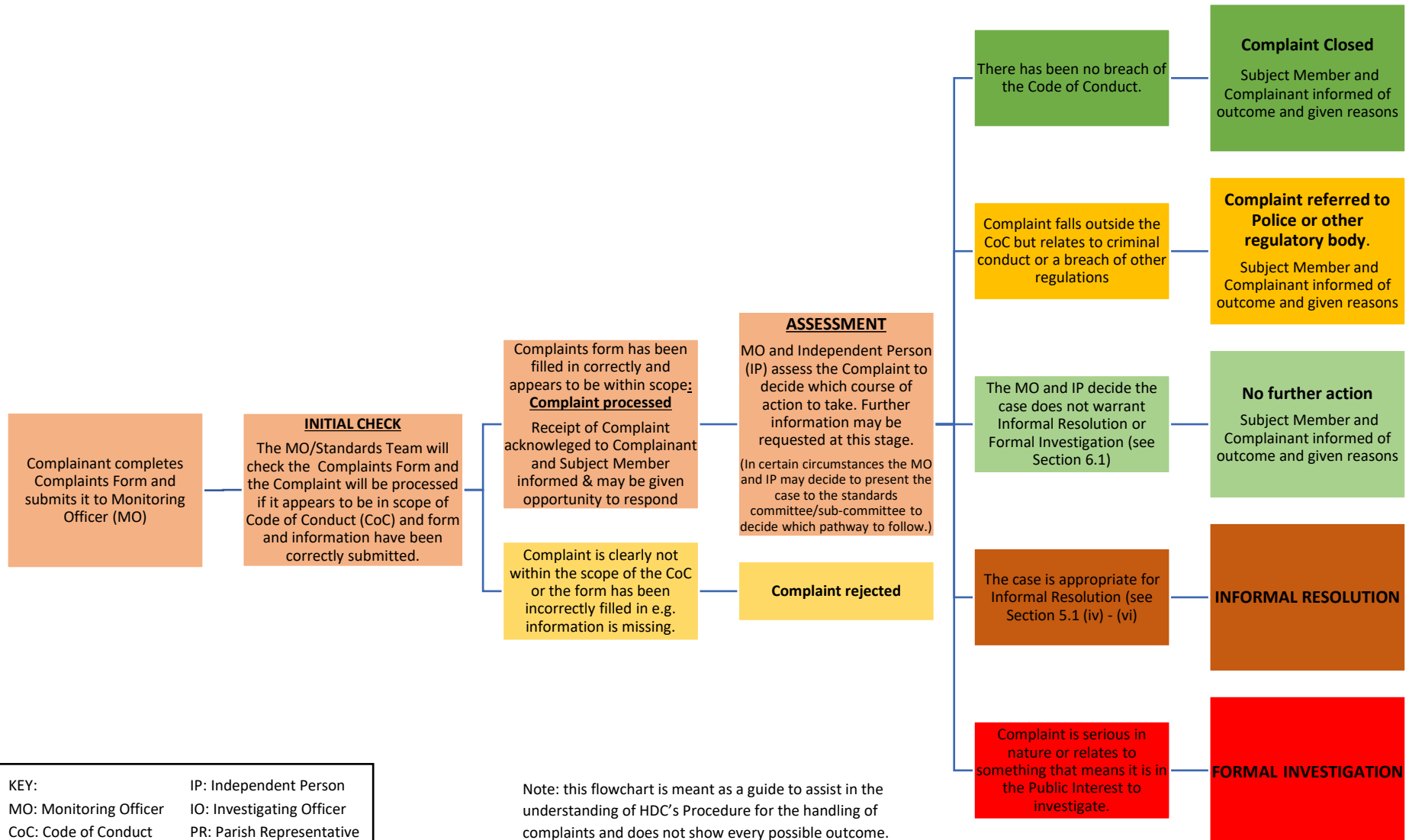
14. In line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 we can make reasonable adjustments to assist you if you have a disability that prevents you from making your Complaint in writing. We can also help if English is not your first language.

15. If you have any queries or questions regarding any Code of Conduct matters or you need help in completing this form or you want information on the progress of your Complaint, please contact the Monitoring Officer at [standards@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:standards@horsham.gov.uk)

16. This document is available in alternative formats. Please contact [standards@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:standards@horsham.gov.uk) or call 01403215482.

**Appendix B: Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure Flow chart:**

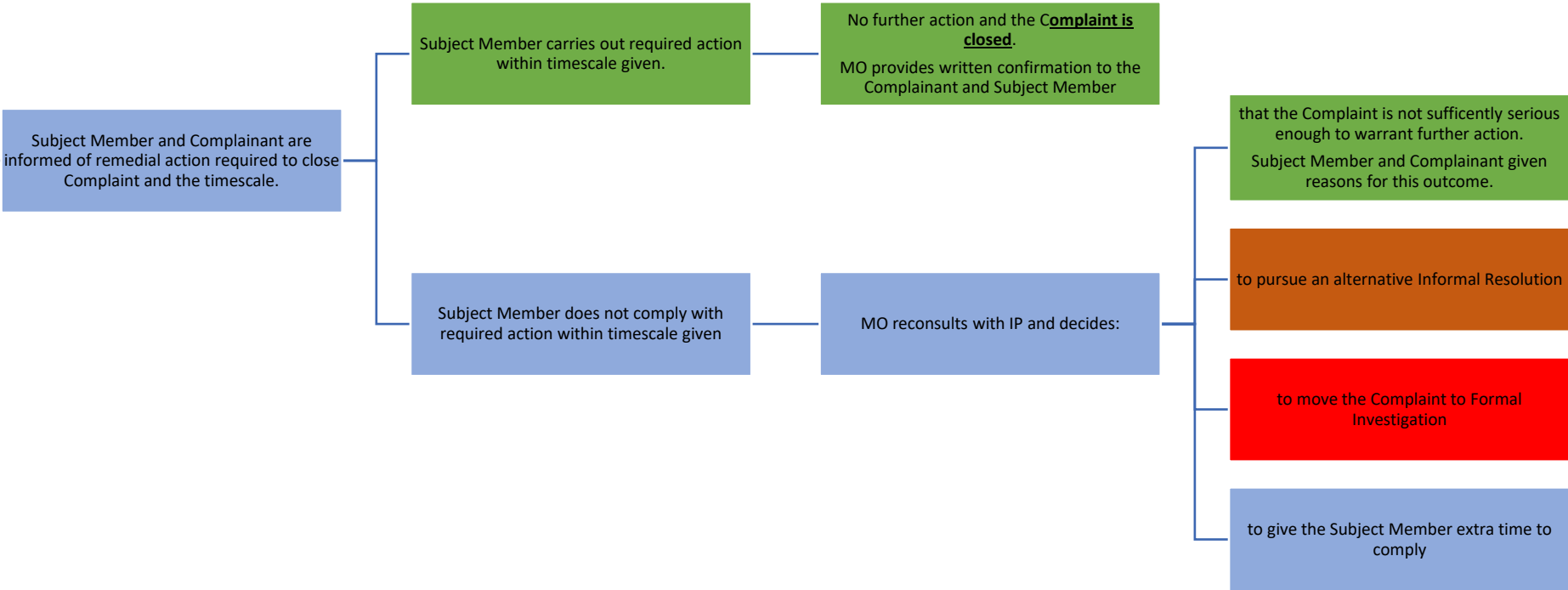
**1. Initial Check & Assessment:**



KEY: IP: Independent Person  
MO: Monitoring Officer IO: Investigating Officer  
CoC: Code of Conduct PR: Parish Representative

Note: this flowchart is meant as a guide to assist in the understanding of HDC's Procedure for the handling of complaints and does not show every possible outcome.

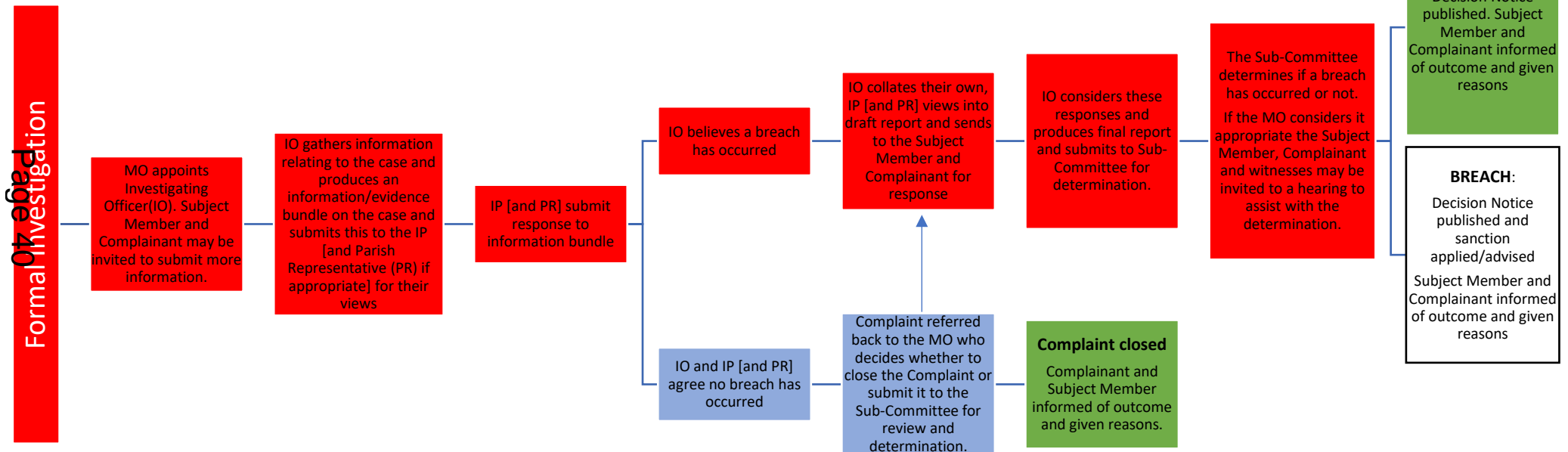
2 Informal Resolution:



KEY:	IP: Independent Person
MO: Monitoring Officer	IO: Investigating Officer
CoC: Code of Conduct	PR: Parish Representative

Note: this flowchart is meant as a guide to assist in the understanding of HDC's Procedure for the handling of complaints and does not show every possible outcome.

### 3 Formal Investigation:



KEY:	IP: Independent Person
MO: Monitoring Officer	IO: Investigating Officer
CoC: Code of Conduct	PR: Parish Representative

Note: this flowchart is meant as a guide to assist in the understanding of HDC's Procedure for the handling of complaints and does not show every possible outcome.



## **Appendix C: The Public Interest Test for Assessing a Code of Conduct Complaint**

1. A Code of Conduct for councillors sets out the high standards of behaviour which the public expects from its elected representatives in the authority to which they are elected. The procedure set out in this Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure provides the opportunity for individuals to inform the Council when they believe a member of Horsham District Council or one of Horsham District's Parish or Neighbourhood Councils has breached the relevant Code of Conduct.
2. The Complaints Procedure is crucial in achieving standards of conduct that meet public expectations. Through this process the Council aims to support proper decision-making, the proper use of public resources, and to maintain public confidence in the Council and the democratic process itself. Undertaking investigations that do not support these wider benefits is not in the public interest.
3. The Council is of the view that its limited resources should not be used to investigate matters which are trivial or which have little or no impact upon the public. It is important that we focus our investigations on matters that are serious and are capable of undermining the relationship between councillors and the public they serve, such as: corruption, bullying, damaging the Council's public image, bringing the Council into disrepute, or the misuse of power in public office.
4. At the Assessment stage the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person, will consider if it is in the public interest to pursue a complaint to Formal Investigation, ~~Informal Local~~ Resolution or to dismiss the case.
5. The Monitoring Officer and Investigating Officer will constantly assess in the course of the complaints process whether continuing the Complaint to Formal Investigation is in the public interest.
6. There is no widely accepted definition of public interest, but it has been described as "*something which is of serious concern and benefit to the public*". The public interest therefore relates to something which has an impact on the public and is not merely a matter the public finds to be of interest.
7. The public interest factors which we may take into account are:
  - the seriousness of the breach;
  - whether the Subject Member deliberately sought personal gain for themselves or another person at the public expense;
  - whether the circumstances of the breach are such that a Subject Member has misused a position of trust or authority and caused harm to another; or

- whether the breach was motivated by any form of discrimination against an ethnic group, nationality, gender, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

### **Considerations**

8. When taking any of the factors in paragraph 7 into account, relevant considerations can include the circumstances of the Complaint, such as:
  - the extent to which the Subject Member was responsible for, or was to blame for, the alleged breach;
  - whether the alleged conduct was premeditated and/or planned; or
  - whether the alleged conduct has caused harm or impacted on another person, group, or body.
  
9. Views expressed by the Complainant, or any other person affected by the alleged conduct, relating to the impact and effect will also be considered. Other considerations may be:
  - whether there is evidence of previous similar behaviour on the part of the Subject Member;
  - whether the Subject Member has been the focus of previous complaints or investigations for a similar matter and is, therefore, showing a negative pattern of behaviour or there is evidence of escalating behaviour;
  - whether a Formal Investigation is required to maintain public confidence in elected members within Horsham District;
  - whether Formal Investigation is a proportionate response;
  - whether it is likely that the breach would lead to a sanction being applied to the Subject Member;
  - whether the use of resources in carrying out a Formal Investigation would be regarded as excessive, when weighed against any likely sanction.
  
10. Public interest will not be decided on the basis of resource alone, but this is a relevant consideration when making an overall assessment. A balanced view will be taken and consideration of the outcomes of previous cases considered by the Standards Sub- Committee will be helpful in achieving this. Not all factors considered here will be relevant to every case and there may be other factors taken into consideration by the Monitoring Officer when deciding if it is in the public interest to pursue a Complaint.

## Report to Standards Committee

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023

By Lauren Kelly, Head of Legal & Democratic Services  
& Monitoring Officer



**Horsham  
District  
Council**

### **DECISION REQUIRED**

Not Exempt

## **Steyping Parish Council**

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to (i) update the Standards Committee in relation to the difficulties which have existed at Steyping Parish Council for several years, and (ii) agree an approach to deal with Steyping Parish Council.

These difficulties have been reported to the Standards Committee previously.

Accordingly, the Monitoring Officer requests that the Standards Committee considers the content of this report and approves the recommendations detailed herein.

### **Recommendations**

That the Standards Committee is recommended to:

- i) Approve that the Monitoring Officer and Standards Team continue to support Steyping Parish Council in implementing its plan to tackle issues, which was recommended by the Hoey & Ainscough intervention; and
- ii) Approve that all outstanding code of conduct complaints are considered dealt with and completed by way of informal resolution under the Hoey & Ainscough intervention; and
- iii) Approve that any new code of conduct complaints received after 26 July 2023 are considered by either the Monitoring Officer or a Deputy Monitoring Officer and/or a Standards Sub Committee in consultation with the Independent Person to assess the merits and seriousness of any alleged code breaches. If (i) the facts and evidence demonstrate that a formal investigation is warranted, and (ii) it is in the public interest, the complaints will be referred for formal investigation and determination. If appropriate, sanctions will be recommended, and Decision Notices will be published.

## Reasons for recommendations

- i) To support Steyning Parish Council in improving relationships between the parish councillors generally and the Clerk's office;
- ii) To assist Steyning Parish Council with its ongoing plan to tackle issues as recommended by the Hoey & Ainscough intervention;
- iii) To help councillors not to dwell on the past and to look forward so that behaviours improve restoring harmony and good positive working relationships at Steyning Parish Council. This, in turn, will ensure that Horsham District Council's financial and other resources are utilised efficiently and effectively so that the Council has the capacity to offer assistance to other parish councils too;
- iv) To ensure the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct amongst members throughout the district.

## Background Papers

Localism Act 2011, Chapter 7.

The Code of Conduct and the Council's arrangements for dealing with code of conduct complaints.

Previous reports regarding Steyning Parish Council can be viewed at the following links:

Report to Standards Committee – 16/03/2022

Agenda item 6, pages 11 to 20:

<https://horsham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g1957/Public%20reports%20pack%2016th-Mar-2022%2010.00%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

Report to Standards Committee – 30/11/2022

Agenda item 6, pages 15 to 56:

<https://horsham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g2232/Public%20reports%20pack%2030th-Nov-2022%2010.00%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

Report to Standards Committee – 15/03/2023

Agenda item 6, pages 7 to 12:

<https://horsham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g2233/Public%20reports%20pack%2015th-Mar-2023%2010.00%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

## Wards affected:

Steyning Parish Council & ALL

**Contact:** Lauren Kelly, Head of Legal & Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer  
[Lauren.Kelly@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:Lauren.Kelly@horsham.gov.uk) Telephone 01403 215435

## **Background Information**

### **1 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 There have been previous reports to the Standards Committee regarding the difficulties at Steyning Parish Council. These reports can be viewed by accessing the relevant links detailed in the background papers.
- 1.2 Steyning Parish Council has experienced difficulties for many years. These difficulties extend to the relationships at Steyning Parish Council which result in code of conduct complaints. The code of conduct complaints are (i) made between parish councillors, (ii) brought by ex-councillors against parish councillors, (iii) lodged by members of the public against parish councillors.
- 1.3 Consequently, over the years, Steyning Parish Council has taken up a disproportionate amount of time of the Standards Team in dealing with numerous code of conduct complaints and other interconnected matters.
- 1.4 For example, Steyning Parish Council has accounted for 80% of all code of conduct complaints received in the financial year of 2021/2022 and 64% of all code of conduct complaints received in 2022/2023 and 58% of all code of conduct complaints in the first 3 months of this financial year. This totals 51 complaints in this two year and 3-month period and averages at 67% of the total of code of conduct complaints, when Steyning is just one parish out of 35 parish and neighbourhood Councils in the District.
- 1.5 As a result of these ongoing difficulties Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd (a consultant firm of Standards experts) was commissioned to (i) report on the failings present, and, (ii) make recommendations to improve, inter alia, relationships at Steyning Parish Council.
- 1.6 As such, an Implementation Plan (detailing the actions to put in place to help improve the situation at Steyning Parish Council) was drafted and adopted by Steyning Parish Council at its meeting on 21 November 2022. Steyning Parish Council committed to providing a progress report to Horsham District Council at six- and twelve-month intervals. Steyning Parish Council submitted the six-month progress report to the Standards Team on 17 May 2023.
- 1.6 Eight new Parish Councillors were elected to Steyning Parish Council following the May 2023 parish council elections.

### **2 Relevant Council policy**

- 2.1 The relevant statutory background is contained in Chapter 7 to the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.2 The Council's arrangements and process in dealing with code of conduct complaints can be viewed at the following link:

### **3 Details**

- 3.1 The long history of problems and difficulties at Steyning Parish Council which has resulted in many code of conduct complaints over the years resulted in Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd independently reviewing, reporting and making recommendations for improvements.
- 3.2 The total cost to Horsham District Council of the Hoey Ainscough process was £13,680. The Hoey & Ainscough report detailed 36 recommendations and Steyning Parish Council devised an implementation plan to reflect these. At its Full Parish Council meeting on Monday 21 November 2022, it resolved “to take the actions and to implement the recommendations as detailed and to report on the progress in 6 months and 12 months to Steyning Parish Full Council meeting and to the Monitoring Officer at Horsham District Council”.
- 3.3 On 17 May 2023, following Steyning Parish Council’s meeting on the 15 May 2023, the Clerk submitted the “SPC Six-Month implementation review” (“the Review”). The Review, attached in Appendix A, details the original recommendations, action to be taken, by whom, and then a review of the actions.
- 3.4 It is believed that the Review was prepared largely before the May 2023 election. The Review is disputed, and the District Council Members of the Standards Committee has received representations in this connection.
- 3.5 The Clerk was authorised to submit the Review to the Monitoring Officer and was delegated responsibility to express the sentiment that Steyning Parish Council was very optimistic about the future and will continue to try to work together collaboratively for the greater good of Steyning.
- 3.6 The Clerk stated the above and elaborated that “there were many comments expressed during the discussion at their meeting on 15 May 2023 that are worthy of note. The main point is that following the May election it should be noted that 8 new councillors were elected to Steyning Parish Council, and at their first meeting it followed that many of the new councillors, and indeed many of those that had been re-elected, wanted to draw a line under previous issues, and as one councillor expressed it, concentrate on ‘forward looking behavioural based aspirations’. Indeed, it was a view from some that the plan and the Review was not entirely relevant anymore.”
- 3.7 The Monitoring Officer, the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person, viewed a recording of part of the first parish council meeting. They agreed that it was abundantly evident that there was a genuine desire by the vast majority of councillors to move on, draw a line and look forward rather than backwards. Further, it was noted that the new councillors had no desire or interest in considering past difficulties or no interest in siding with any previous faction. The new councillors appear to wish to work together collaboratively and positively for the benefit of the Steyning parish and its constituents.

- 3.8 Regrettably, however, the Standards Team continues to receive code of conduct complaints and allegations that some Councillors have not and will not change. The complainants contend that the only way there will be any change is if previous and outstanding code of complaints are formally investigated and determined.
- 3.9 Accordingly, the Monitoring Officer has continued to assess complaints with the independent person but has decided not to formally investigate any of these. Instead, it was thought appropriate to deal with these by way of informal resolution. As such, further meetings were recently convened with some of the relevant parties. These meetings were extremely positive and there was a clear desire to look forward and consider past difficulties as closed. These parties made commitments to behave appropriately and there is a general feeling that matters have improved markedly at Steyning, especially with the large influx of new Councillors.
- 3.10 Some complainants declined an invitation to meet with the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Independent Person and there has been repeated requests from some complainants that previous code of conduct complaints are formally investigated and determined. It is understood that Standards Committee members and on some occasions all Horsham District Councillors have received direct communications and representations regarding this.
- 3.11 After some years, however, it is clear that Steyning Parish Council may have now changed and be capable of change for the better. The Monitoring Officer believes that this is due to (i) the influx of new councillors with positive attitudes and little interest in past difficulties, and (ii) the commitments made by parties to continue to modify behaviours, act appropriately and disregard past difficulties and (iii) the benefits of implementing some of the recommendations detailed in the Hoey Ainscough report are beginning to become apparent. It is clear that the vast majority of the parish councillors wish to look forward and to undertake parish council work for the benefit of the parish, rather than dwell on the past.
- 3.12 Accordingly, the Monitoring Officer is presently firmly of the opinion that progress has been made at Steyning Parish Council and, as such, there would be no merit in delving into the past and instituting formal investigations into existing complaints. To do so could jeopardise, undermine and destabilise the new administration. As such, it is the belief that (i) the Standards Team should continue to support Steyning Parish Council, (ii) existing complaints should be closed, (iii) future complaints should be assessed in the usual way and formally investigated if warranted and if in the public interest to do so, and, (iv) the Standards Team continues to monitor Steyning Parish Council.
- 3.13 The Monitoring Officer is aware that not all parish councillors will be content with the recommendations contained in this report. Any councillors have the right to refer their individual complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

## **4 Next Steps**

- 4.1 The Standards Committee is asked to approve the recommendations.



## **5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations**

- 5.1 The views of any Policy Development Advisory Groups have not been sought.
- 5.2 The views of the Independent Person have been sought in relation to the content and recommendations contained in this report. The Independent Person expressed strong support for the proposals contained herein.

## **6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected**

- 6.1 To formally investigate and determine existing outstanding complaints. It is thought that this option could serve to sour relationships at Steyning Parish Council given (i) the new administration, and (ii) that there is a commitment to working in a positive and collaborative manner. Therefore, this option was rejected.

## **7 Resource Consequences**

- 7.1 There are cost implications in formally investigating and determining the code of conduct complaints pertaining to Steyning Parish Council. The total cost will depend on the number and the detail of the complaints received.
- 7.2 It is hoped, therefore, that further training and implementing the recommendations and providing ongoing support assistance and interventions will improve future relations, and ongoing complaints therefore reduce, leading to less resource and financial implications for the Legal Department.

## **8 Legal Considerations and Implications**

- 8.1 The Council has a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. In addition, it must have arrangements in place to deal effectively with conduct of conduct complaints. Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 refers.
- 8.2 Horsham District Council's Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure allows the Monitoring Officer to (i) employ an alternative means of resolution, and (ii) not take further action.

## **9 Risk Assessment**

- 9.1 There exists a risk of challenge in deciding not to investigate and determine individual code of conduct complaints. That said, the recommendations contained in this report are justified and considered appropriate and more likely to improve the relationships at Steyning Parish Council.

## **10 Procurement implications**

- 10.1 There are no procurement implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

- 11.1 There are no such implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **12 Environmental Implications**

- 12.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **13 Other Considerations**

- 13.1 There are no GDPR, Data Protection or Crime & Disorder consequences arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Review of Actions
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## Hoey Ainscough Report Draft Review April '23 – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R1	As a priority the Council should sign up to the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge.	All Cllrs sign up and agree to abide by the pledge at a Full Council Meeting	SPC	COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE Council {as a body corporate} is signed up But 4 Cllrs are refusing to take the pledge
R2	In doing so the Council should collectively agree what language is and is not appropriate in meetings and correspondence among councillors and with officers, how such language should be challenged in meetings and how meetings can be run more efficiently without getting bogged down in minutiae nor stifling legitimate debate. Behaviour needs to be re-set to improve relationships to allow Council business to be transacted.	Agreement on Language can be made via Working Practices WP  The tone of the emails is a more difficult issue to deal with – as to how – at present this is unresolved – in the first instance this should be self-regulated by Clerk and then by majority rule from the Council if needs be.	Working Practices Then agreed at Full Council  Clerk to regulate in first instance– emails. Chairs to challenge Cllrs in - meetings. Council to agree or otherwise	PART COMPLETE, MAINLY THROUGH NONCOLLABORATION BY CLLRS Council is agreeing to new policies and a new agreement as to language used in correspondence and meetings stems from this. Unfortunately, those councillors who in the main are not being respectful, it seems continue not to see that their behaviour is poor, and are not agreeing to the policy amendments and therefore it appears an improvement 're-set' is unlikely.
R3	In agreeing to the Pledge, all councillors should give an undertaking to treat fellow councillors and officers with respect and not to make personal attacks on individuals or their integrity. <b>Until such respect is shown the Council cannot move forward</b>	Behaviour needs to be modified by first taking the pledge. If some individuals do not understand that they are causing offence, then hopefully they will respect other Cllrs and the clerks' comments and not continue to argue their position.	Cllrs  All Cllrs have to work together to assist with a higher level of understanding	PART COMPLETE, MAINLY THROUGH NONCOLLABORATION BY CLLRS Those councillors who have agreed to the pledge have also agreed to treat fellow councillors and officers with respect. Those 4 councillors who have not agreed to the pledge have also not agreed to that undertaking.
R4	All councillors should undertake that, where they have concerns about the way a decision has been made or a procedure followed, they should discuss this respectfully with the Clerk and the Clerk should be allowed to give a ruling with reasons such as a reference to existing policy or legislation as to whether or not the concern is legitimate. This ruling should be communicated to all councillors. Where the concern is legitimate such, a ruling should include the steps needed either to rectify the matter with an agreed timescale or the changes needed to prevent the matter re-occurring. Where the majority of councillors accept that the concern has been dealt with, the matter cannot be raised again for six months in line with Standing Orders.	Cllrs to follow the guidance not only of this recommendation and take care in how they raise issues, but then adhering to existing, and any amended, SPC policies, then await a response. The Clerk should respond as soon as reasonably practical or give reasons why not. Cllrs should abide by the response given.  If the requester still has concerns, the matter is taken to all councillors and the majority ruling abided by.	Cllrs  Clerk  Cllrs  Clerk and Cllrs	COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE The Clerk has continued to point out when poor behaviour in meetings or via correspondence has occurred including breaches of policy, respect and good practice. However, the perpetrators do not accept his ruling, rather argue that they have the right to do what they like because they are representatives of the residents. Or they do not even engage in the process, that is, respond to the Clerk.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Review of Actions</b>
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## Hoey Ainscough Report Draft Review April '23 – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

<b>R5</b>	All councillors who are unwilling to take, or abide by, the Pledge and modify their behaviour to improve internal relations should consider resigning with immediate effect for the greater good of the constituents of Steyning and Council business.	All Cllrs to take the pledge  Some Cllrs to modify their behaviour	All Cllrs  Cllrs	<b>COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE</b> Those councillors unwilling to modify their behaviour and abide by the pledge seem unlikely to consider resignation, and there is nothing the council can do about it, and they know this.
<b>R6</b>	The Council should develop a comprehensive training and development strategy for the new Council which covers all areas of Council business. It should in particular include training on the Code of Conduct and appropriate standards of behaviour.	There is already a Training programme in place.  There is a SPC Training 'Statement of intent' and both Cllrs and staff are offered opportunities to train from the moment they 'sign up'.	Cllrs and Clerk	<b>COMPLETED</b> The Council has a comprehensive training and development strategy and indeed is considering an amended policy at its next working practices group meeting which includes more emphasis on training on Code of Conduct and appropriate standards of behaviour
<b>R7</b>	The Council should develop an agreed understanding of the role and expectations for individual Cllrs when they are acting as Full Council members, as committee members, as individuals and as representatives of the Council externally.	Cllrs to re-read the information already provided and abide by Policies.  Clerk to check Cllrs are aware where the information is and resend if necessary	Cllrs  Clerk	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> The Clerk has disseminated information about Roles and Responsibilities and in individual cases on occasion has specified where improvement is needed. This will again be reinforced when the new councillor induction packs are distributed and discussed.  A Cllrs expectations will need to be addressed either in a closed all councillor session to discuss the strategic plan or via an external training session. - TBC
<b>R8</b>	That councillors are reminded that they cannot speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised by the Full Council to do so. Any correspondence from individual councillors needs to make this clear. Where an individual represents themselves as speaking on behalf of the Council, the Clerk should correct the record at the earliest opportunity.	Cllrs to re-read the information already provided and abide by Policies – with an amendment required to email policy to clarify position  Clerk to check Cllrs are aware where the information is and resend if necessary	Cllrs  Clerk	<b>COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE</b> One councillor continues to correspond with outside bodies, and local groups and individuals as a councillor without delegated authority and often in opposition to the council's agreements or policies. The Councillor does not agree with the views of the Hoey report nor the Clerk.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Review of Actions</b>
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## Hoey Ainscough Report Draft Review April '23 – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

<b>R9</b>	That councillors understand their fiduciary duties and vicarious liability and be reminded that they are all individually and severally liable for the finances and employment practices of the Council. Individual councillors should therefore be reminded that they should not act alone and unilaterally once Council collectively has made a decision or agreed a course of action	A Cllrs fiduciary duties and vicarious liability to be written into their guidance pack / information with greater clarity. Then woven into the appropriate SPC policy, then agreed.	Clerk with approval from Council	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> The Cllrs understanding of fiduciary duties and vicarious liability has been discussed but is yet to be set out within an SCP policy.
<b>R10</b>	The Council should consider working with Horsham and the West Sussex Association or any other appropriate organisation approved by Horsham to ensure it has comprehensive and up-to-date HR and grievance policies and that these are effectively enforced	There are policies already in place	N/A	<b>COMPLETED</b> The Council has up-to-date HR and grievance policies.
<b>R11</b>	The Clerk should complete CiLCA as a matter of priority. A timetable should be agreed between the Chair and the Clerk with dedicated 'professional development' time set aside in the working week to allow this to happen	Clerk  Chair & Vice Chair to continue to monitor progress and complete appraisal review before end of 2022	Clerk  Chair and Vice Chair	<b>COMPLETED</b> The Clerk has successfully completed the CiLCA qualification
<b>R12</b>	The Council should ensure that its email policy is properly enforced, and the Clerk empowered to draw a line under correspondence such that if the policy is breached the Clerk will simply reply to say that the email will not be responded to as it falls outside the policy. There may be exceptions for significant urgent matters, but the Council as a whole shall agree a definition of what those exceptions should be. All emails should go through the Clerk.	Email Policy to be amended  Clerk to respond to breaches as per set out in recommendation  Cllrs to abide by response	SPC  Clerk	<b>COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE</b> The email policy has been amended and agreed by council, but one councillor has opposed the changes and ignores some policy guidance. Not all emails are going through the Clerk
<b>R13</b>	The Council should have an agreed and enforced policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious correspondence to ensure that the business of the Council is not unnecessarily diverted.	A new policy should be put in place which covers vexatious behaviour	Clerk to source policy guidance & present to Working Practices for SPC approval	<b>NO ACTION YET</b>
<b>R14</b>	The Council should agree how governance issues should be raised in meetings to allow reasonable discussion but also to allow other business to be transacted.	This item should be discussed at Working Practices and written into Councillor / Officer protocol then agreed at Full Council	Clerk's office to source policy guidance & present to Working Practices for SPC approval	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> There is an understanding of how governance matters should be raised, and a new Officer/ Councillor protocol is now in place, but this might still need to be reinforced - this is yet to be decided
<b>R15</b>	The Council and the Clerk should agree a work schedule to ensure that officers' time is focussed and that there are realistic expectations on their time within agreed working hours.	Produce a working schedule for both Clerk's and Council's agreement	Personnel Committee	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> The appraisal process has helped with many time-wasting practices having been dealt with, by council agreement – still some work to do

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Review of Actions</b>
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## Hoey Ainscough Report Draft Review April '23 – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

<b>R16</b>	The Council needs to agree a councillor-officer protocol which would include a shared agreement as to the circumstances when councillors should have access to officer time and how the Clerk should respond to queries from individual councillors.	This item should be discussed at Personnel Committee and written into Councillor / Officer protocol then agreed at Full Council	Personnel Committee	<b>COMPLETED</b> New Councillor / Officer protocol is now agreed and in place
<b>R17</b>	The Council should review its current staffing structure to ensure it is in line with its strategy and able to help the Council deliver it and that the Clerk's key performance objectives and time are geared to deliver that strategy	Review of Staffing Structure  K. P. I's are already in place, but need to be reviewed before end of 2022	Clerk , Chair & Vice Chair, then Personnel Com' Clerk/Chair/V. Chair	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> Staffing structure is being and has been discussed. New KPI's for the Clerk to be determined in line with new Councils goals after the election
<b>R18</b>	The Council should ensure that the Clerk and the Council make best use of external support and advice from its memberships of professional bodies	Largely this already happens.  To be reviewed by Personnel Committee	Personnel Committee	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> There is advice sought when required, but there is room for improvement, and this is yet to be discussed and agreed by the Personnel Committee / Council
<b>R19</b>	The Council needs to review whether it has all appropriate and up-to-date policies in place and ensure that policies are available on the website.	Some policies to be reviewed and appropriate amendments put in place	Working Practices	<b>COMPLETED</b> Up to date policies in place and on Web Site
<b>R20</b>	The Council needs to adopt a clear statement of councillors' right to information and a 'need to know' policy and review its implementation of freedom of information requests in the light of that policy.	A 'Need to Know' policy to be put in place or its points added to an existing policy	Working Practices	<b>COMPLETED</b> A 'Need to know' statement is now included within the amended SPC Email Policy.
<b>R21</b>	The Council should adopt a recording of meetings policy and decide how long it needs to keep recordings once minutes have been agreed	SPC to consider amending either its Communications policy or its Retention and Disposal policy and or its Community Engagement policy	Working Practices	<b>NO ACTION YET</b>
<b>R22</b>	The Council needs to adopt a social media Policy which would cover both appropriate use of social media by individuals and the Council's own approach to social media as an organisation	There is a policy already in place	N/A	<b>COMPLETED</b> There is a policy in place
<b>R23</b>	The Council needs to review its approach towards planning delegation if this has not already been done in the last six months.	There is a policy now in place	N/A	<b>COMPLETED</b> There is a policy in place
<b>R24</b>	All councillors need to be familiar with Standing Orders and should have a pack which contains all policies, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders that they bring to each and every meeting to aid understanding and avoid confusion.	There is a pack distributed to Cllrs when they take up the position after election	N/A	<b>COMPLETED</b> All Councillors receive an induction pack which includes F. Regs , Standing Orders and other most relevant policies and are asked to bring it to all meetings. {New version to be distributed after '23 election}

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Review of Actions
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## Hoey Ainscough Report Draft Review April '23 – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R25	The '2-minute' rule in Standing Orders should be enforced and all councillors should support the Chair in ensuring the meeting is run efficiently and without conflict. The rule may be waived in exceptional circumstances where an agenda item is of particular significance, but this must be agreed at the start of the agenda item and a revised time limit (say 5 minutes) agreed	This rule has been more robustly enforced recently by all SPC Chairman to ensure meetings are run more efficiently and with less disruption or unnecessary diversion  Chairs to continue use this Standing order, but have in mind when it should be waived	Chairman	<b>ONGOING</b> Despite initial reluctance from some Cllrs, and sometimes annoyance from same when Chairman attempts to use this rule in a strict manor, nonetheless it is being observed more successfully as time passes and Cllrs get used to the idea.
R26	Minutes should be agreed at the following meeting. Amendments can only be proposed by those who attended the meeting and should be factual only rather than opinion	Councillors to continue to be aware of the comments noted within the recommendation and abide by them Chairman to enforce this	Cllrs  Chairman	<b>COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE</b> Minutes are now being agreed in a way more conforming to best practice, however some councillors are still determined to discuss matters which are not necessarily concerning their accuracy
R27	Minutes should be done in the recommended style as a record of the decisions made at meetings to help anybody understand the process by which a decision is made. So, they should make clear the decision taken with some brief summary of matters considered for and against	None	Clerk	<b>COMPLETED</b> The style and content of minutes is now rarely challenged. There is progressively less of a disruption caused by some Cllrs concerning Draft Minute agreement.
R28	The requirement that voting is recorded should be reconsidered	Cllrs should be aware that Standing orders gives them the right to ask for voting to be recorded, however this should be used sparingly and not agreed for the whole or 'rest of the' meeting	Cllrs / Chairman	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> There is progress concerning a lesser consideration for voting to be recorded, however there is still room for improvement
R29	The practice of allowing a councillor who cannot attend a meeting to send their views for consideration at that meeting should be stopped	This practice to stop forthwith	Cllrs	<b>COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE</b> The issue is less frequent than before, but one councillor remains keen to have his views discussed in his absence
R30	The agendas for meetings should be timetabled to ensure business is effectively transacted. Where there needs to be a variation to the timetable that should be agreed at the start of the meeting	Timetabling 'guidance' to start at the 21st of November Full Council Meeting This is still subject to Chairmans discretion	Clerk / Chairman	<b>COMPLETED</b> This guidance tool is now being used to good effect when necessary
R31	Apologies for absence should only be accepted where a valid reason is either given to the meeting or given to the Clerk in confidence	This was reviewed at the recent meeting with HDC Monitoring Officer, and it was generally agreed that current practice is acceptable – to avoid conflict	All	<b>COMPLETE OTHER THAN CLLR NON-COMPLIANCE</b> Some Councillors are choosing not to give any apologies when absent.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Review of Actions</b>
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## Hoey Ainscough Report Draft Review April '23 – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

<b>R32</b>	After the next election the new Council should develop a fully costed and resourced long-term strategic plan for the Town putting personal agendas and differences aside for the greater good of the Steyning community	None	Clerk & SPC	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> There is a strategic plan in place, but a new one is to be considered after the election as per recommendation
<b>R33</b>	The Council should review its communication strategy in conjunction with the public to evaluate its effectiveness and ensure that the public understands the work of the Council, is engaged in developing a vision for Steyning and is able to participate more fully in local decision-making.	Low priority to be reviewed by new Council if they feel it necessary	New Council	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> There is a policy in place and the council has actively pursued more resident engagement since November, but there is still much work to do
<b>R34</b>	The Council Chair and Clerk should look to learn from and share best practice with outstanding local councils.	Best Practice is already shared and taken up when appropriate. Needs to be discussed more openly when disruption lessens	Chairman & Clerk	<b>NO ACTION YET</b>
<b>R35</b>	Where Steyning Parish Council needs to use external support to comply with these recommendations, they should consult with Horsham District Council and the West Sussex Association before agreeing such support to ensure they have considered all the options and are obtaining expert advice at value for money.	Consultation is already in place.  Council to maintain open minded approach to support and expertise	Councillors & Clerk	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> The Council has used support and has continued to engage in discussions with HDC, but could do more
<b>R36</b>	Steyning Parish Council should develop an initial implementation plan within six weeks of the report which should be shared with the monitoring officer of Horsham District Council. They should also report on their progress in implementing this action plan to the monitoring officer in 6 months and again in 12 months after the date of this report	Draft Implementation Plan completed and agreed at 21st November Full Council meeting  Progress review May 15th SPC Full Council Meeting – Then sent to HDC  Final Review at October 23 SPC Full Council Meeting – Then sent to HDC	SPC & Clerk	<b>PARTIALLY COMPLETED</b> Implementation plan completed and agreed  Six-month draft review completed

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### Of the 36 Recommendations: -

11 - Fully Completed,

11 - Partially Completed,

8 - Complete, other than the refusal or reluctance by Cllr or Cllrs to comply

1 - Ongoing

3 - Not been actioned yet

2 - Partly complete mainly through noncollaboration from Cllr or Cllrs