



Arrangements for dealing with Standards Allegations against Councillors and co-opted Members under the Localism Act 2011

1. Context

This procedure is used to deal with complaints from any individual relating to alleged breaches of the Councillor Code of Conduct adopted by Waverley Borough Council and the Codes of Conduct adopted by Parish and Town Councils in the Waverley area.

2. Borough, Town and Parish Codes of Conduct

Upon taking office, Borough, Town or Parish Councillors and co-opted Members within the Waverley area must sign up to a 'code of conduct' which commits them to high standards of conduct and behaviour.

Waverley Borough Council has adopted the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 which is available on Waverley Borough Council's website at www.waverley.gov.uk and on request from Reception at the Council Offices.

The relevant Codes of Conduct for the Town and Parish Councils are available for inspection via Waverley Borough Council's website or directly from the relevant Town or Parish website (if the Parish Council has one) and may also be viewed by arrangement with the Town or Parish Clerk.

3. Making a complaint

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer is a senior officer of the Council who has statutory responsibility for maintaining the Register of Councillors' Interests and is responsible for dealing with complaints about councillor misconduct.
- 3.2 Complaints about the conduct of a Waverley Borough or a Town or Parish councillor or co-opted Member should be made in writing to:

The Monitoring Officer
Waverley Borough Council
Council Offices
The Burys
Godalming
Surrey
GU7 1HR

Or by email to: monitoring.officer@waverley.gov.uk

- 3.3 Complaints should include the name and contact details of the complainant to enable the complaint to be acknowledged, and status updates provided. The Monitoring Officer or an officer acting on their behalf will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days of receiving it.
- 3.4 Where a complaint concerns an issue between two Waverley Borough Councillors, the Monitoring Officer will initially refer the matter to the appropriate Group Leader(s) to resolve amongst themselves, if possible. Every effort should be made to resolve the matter within 28 days and if this is not possible the matter may be referred back to the Monitoring Officer
- 3.5 Where complaints are made about a Town or Parish Councillor or co-opted Member, the Monitoring Officer will advise the Town or Parish Clerk of the details of the complaint and will consult them, in confidence, over how the complaint is handled. This may include referring the matter to the Clerk in the first instance to seek to resolve the matter informally if this is considered a suitable and appropriate approach to take and if the Clerk agrees to take this approach.
- 3.6 Where the Monitoring Officer considers that they should not perform any or all of the Monitoring Officer functions under these arrangements owing to an actual or potential conflict of interest, the Monitoring Officer will instruct a Deputy Monitoring Officer or other suitably qualified and experienced officer to act in their place.
- 3.7 In the event that the councillor or co-opted member being complained about resigns their position before the conclusion of the Monitoring Officer's enquiries, the Monitoring Officer will normally cease their enquiries. The Monitoring Officer must consult with the Independent Person before making a decision to continue their enquiries in the public interest.

4. Executive summary of arrangements

A note on the role of the Independent Person

- At any stage, the Monitoring Officer MAY choose to consult the designated 'Independent Person' and MUST do so before:
 - Deciding to commission a formal investigation into a complaint;
 - Accepting an anonymous complaint;
 - Agreeing to withhold a complainant's identity.
- The Independent Person has a valuable role to play in this process and the Monitoring Officer will reflect carefully on any view they give before making their own decisions during the process.
- Please see section 11 of these arrangements for more information about the Independent Person and their role in the process.

Step	What	Possible outcomes	Timescales
1	<p>Submission and acknowledgement of your complaint</p> <p>A complaint is submitted in writing by email or letter and Waverley will acknowledge receipt of it within 5 working days.</p>		5 working days
2	<p>Can this complaint be considered under these arrangements?</p> <p>If the complaint is about an alleged breach by a councillor or co-opted Member in the Waverley area it will probably be dealt with under these arrangements. There are various reasons why it may not be possible to consider a complaint under these arrangements. In some cases, a complaint may be dealt with under the corporate complaints procedure instead.</p>	If the complaint cannot be considered under these arrangements, the process ends here.	5 working days
3	<p>As a matter of fairness and natural justice, the councillor being complained about will usually be told who the complainant is and will also receive details of the complaint. However, in exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate to withhold the complainant's identity for some of all or steps of the process. Requests for a complainant's identity to be withheld will be considered by the Monitoring Officer on a case-by-case basis against the criteria set out within these arrangements. The Monitoring Officer will always consult the Independent Person before deciding to accept an anonymous complaint or withhold a complainant's identity.</p>		15 working days (only where anonymity is requested)
4	<p>Initial review of complaint by Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>This is likely to involve reading any relevant correspondence and documentation including the complaint and may involve an initial informal discussion between the Monitoring Officer and the councillor who is being complained about.</p>	The MO may decide at this point that there is no case for the councillor to answer. If so, the MO will write to the complainant confirming his or her judgement and explaining the reasons for it. Where this is the case, the process ends here.	

<p>4</p>	<p>The Monitoring Officer will consider whether they can appropriately and satisfactorily deal with the complaint without an investigation.</p> <p>Many matters can be appropriately and satisfactorily dealt with without the need for an investigation, for example by the Monitoring Officer issuing written or verbal advice to others.</p>	<p>If no investigation is needed, the MO will write to the complainant confirming their judgement and any action taken to resolve the matter and explaining the reasons for it. Where this is the case, the process ends here.</p> <p>Exceptionally, at the end of this stage the Monitoring Officer, after consulting the Independent Person, may conclude there is no realistic prospect of resolving the matter informally and commission an external formal investigation (step 7)</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Informal investigation if necessary and appropriate</p> <p>If an investigation is necessary then wherever possible and appropriate the Monitoring Officer will try to do this on an informal basis. This is likely to involve talking to the parties involved to establish what has happened. The Monitoring Officer will try to establish if there is any evidence of a breach of the code.</p>	<p>At the end of this stage the MO may write to the complainant and the councillor being complained about explaining why they judge there to be no evidence of a breach of the code. If so, the process ends here.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Consideration of informal investigation findings</p> <p>If, having informally investigated the complaint, the Monitoring Officer concludes there appears to be evidence of a breach of the code by the councillor (or is unable to conclude with certainty whether or not there has been), they will either:</p> <p>(i) Seek to resolve the matter on an informal basis. This could include, for example, writing to the councillor concerned and/or their Group Leader with his or her findings and providing advice about future conduct.</p>	<p>At the end of this stage the MO may write to the complainant and the councillor being complained about explaining their findings and explaining what action has been taken to resolve the complaint on an informal basis. Where that is the case, the process ends here.</p>	<p>Where an informal approach is taken, the Monitoring Officer will aim to resolve and close the complaint within 30 working days of confirming the complaint can be</p>

	<p>OR</p> <p>(ii) Commission an external investigator to investigate the complaint on a formal basis.</p> <p>Please note that where there is evidence of a breach of the code, the vast majority of cases can be dealt satisfactorily on an informal basis.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer will always consult the Independent Person before deciding to commission a formal investigation and may consult them at any other time.</p>	<p>Alternatively the Monitoring Officer may conclude, after consulting with the IP, that there should be a formal investigation (please see step 7).</p>	<p>considered under these arrangements (or making a decision on anonymity where this is requested).</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Formal investigation</p> <p>If the Monitoring Officer decides that a complaint merits formal investigation, they will appoint an Investigating Officer who may be an officer of another authority or an external investigator. The investigator will review all documentation (which may include online material or recordings of public meetings) and may (or may not) interview the complainant, the councillor being complained about or any other individual.</p> <p>The investigator will share drafts of their report with both the complainant and the councillor being complained about and provide both with the opportunity to comment before submitting their final draft to the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>At the formal investigation stage, the councillor complained about has a right to also consult the Independent Person. The complainant does not have this right.</p>	<p>At the end of this stage, the Monitoring Officer may conclude, on the basis of the formal investigation report submitted, that there is <i>no</i> evidence of a breach of the code. In which case, the process ends here.</p> <p>Alternatively, the Monitoring Officer may conclude, on the basis of the formal investigation report submitted, that there is evidence of a breach of the code. In which case, the matter will progress.</p>	<p>Timescales will depend on the specific situation.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Local Resolution?</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer may consider that the matter can reasonably be resolved without the need for a hearing. In such a case, they will consult with the Independent Person and with the complainant and seek to agree what they consider to be a fair resolution which also helps to ensure higher standards of conduct for the future.</p>	<p>This step may be skipped if the Monitoring Officer judges there is no prospect of a local resolution.</p> <p>Alternatively, this may be the last stage of the process if the matter can satisfactorily be resolved in this way.</p>	

<p>9</p>	<p>Panel Hearing?</p> <p>If the Monitoring Officer considers that local resolution is not appropriate, or the complainant is not satisfied by the proposed resolution, or the councillor concerned is not prepared to undertake any proposed remedial action, such as giving an apology, then the Monitoring Officer will report the Investigating Officer's report to a Hearings Panel of three Councillors drawn from the Group appointed by the Council, which will conduct a local hearing before deciding whether the councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and, if so, whether to take any action in respect of the councillor.</p> <p>Meetings of the Hearings Panel will be held in public unless the Monitoring Officer agrees there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this. Papers may be withheld from the public if there is a reason to do so.</p> <p>In the case of a complaint involving a Town or Parish Councillor, as well as the three Councillors, there will be a Town or Parish Councillor attending as a non-voting Councillor.</p> <p>If the Hearings Panel concludes that the councillor did fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Chairman will inform the councillor of this finding and the Hearings Panel will then consider what action, if any, the Hearings Panel should take as a result of the councillor's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Section 8 of these arrangements sets out what action can be taken as a result of the Hearings Panel's conclusions.</p> <p>The Hearings Panel has no power to suspend or disqualify the councillor or to withdraw councillors' allowances or special responsibility allowances.</p> <p>In the case of Town or Parish complaints, the conclusion will be referred to that Town or Parish Council for such action it considers appropriate.</p>	<p>At the end of this stage, the Hearings Panel may conclude that the councillor did not breach their code of conduct.</p> <p>Alternatively, the Hearings Panel may conclude that the councillor did breach their code of conduct. Where this is the case, the panel will decide what action, if any should be taken.</p>	
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5. Will the complaint be investigated and how?

Can the complaint be considered under these arrangements?

- 5.1 Complaints that allege a breach by a named councillor (or councillors) of their code of conduct can be considered under these arrangements.
- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer or an officer acting on their behalf will review every complaint received and apply the following criteria before making a decision as to whether or not this is the case.

Which complaints will not be considered under these arrangements?

- 5.3 The following types of complaint will not be considered under these arrangements:
- a) Complaints which do not identify a subject Councillor or co-opted Member (the person who is being complained about);
 - b) Complaints which relate only to a Councillor's or co-opted Member's personal or private life;
 - c) Complaints concerning a failure to respond to a request from a constituent or other individual;
 - d) Complaints which relate to the alleged actions of employees of the Council who are subject to a different code and the corporate complaints process;
 - e) Complaints which relate to a decision of an employee or a Committee;
 - f) Complaints which relate to a person who is no longer a Councillor or which refer to alleged incidents before the person became a Councillor;
 - g) Complaints which refer to alleged incidents which happened more than 3 months ago (unless the Monitoring Officer agrees there are exceptional circumstances necessitating the investigation of historic complaints).
 - h) Complaints containing trivial allegations, or which are judged by the Monitoring Officer to be vexatious, malicious, politically motivated or tit-for-tat;
 - i) Complaints regarding alleged behaviour by a councillor which is, or has within the past 3 months, been subject to investigation or action determined by the Monitoring Officer or Panel Hearing .
 - j) Complaints which do not relate to the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

What information will be shared with the councillor being complained about?

- 5.4 In all cases where the complaint names a Councillor of a relevant authority, the Councillor will be notified of the complaint. If the Monitoring Officer decides that the complaint cannot be considered under these arrangements, this notification is made for information only.
- 5.5 As a matter of fairness and natural justice, the Councillor being complained about will usually be told who the complainant is and will also receive details of the complaint. However, in exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate to withhold the complainant's identity for some or all steps within the process.

- 5.6 Requests for the complainant's identity to be withheld will be considered by the Monitoring Officer on a case-by-case basis against the criteria set out within these arrangements.
- 5.7 The Monitoring Officer will always consult the Independent Person before deciding to accept an anonymous complaint or withhold a complainant's identity.
- 5.8 The Monitoring Officer may withhold the complainant's identity and/or details of the complaint if they are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the complainant or any other person (e.g. a witness):
- (a) is either vulnerable or at risk of threat, harm or reprisal;
 - (b) may suffer intimidation or be victimised or harassed;
 - (c) works closely with the councillor they are complaining about;
 - (d) suffers from a serious health condition and there are medical risks associated with their identity being disclosed (medical evidence will need to be provided to substantiate this);
- OR where early disclosure of the complaint:
- (e) may lead to evidence being compromised or destroyed; or
 - (f) may impede or prejudice the investigation; or
 - (g) would not be in the public interest.
- 5.9 Relevant public interest factors favouring disclosure (not an exhaustive list) include:
- (a) to facilitate transparency and ethical governance accountability: recognising that decision-making may be improved by constructive contributions from others;
 - (b) to raise public awareness: disclosing the complaint or part of it may inform the community about matters of general concern;
 - (c) justice to an individual: the balance of the public interest may favour disclosure of the complaint to the Member when it may not be in the public interest to disclose it to the world at large;
 - (d) bringing out in the open serious concerns about the behaviour/conduct of an individual.
- 5.10 The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person, will balance whether the public interest in accepting the complaint outweighs the complainant's wish to have their identity (or that of another person) withheld from the councillor being complained about.
- 5.11 If the Monitoring Officer decides to refuse the complainant's request for confidentiality, they will offer the complainant the option to withdraw their complaint.
- 5.12 The complainant will be notified of the Monitoring Officer's decision, with reasons, within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint by the Monitoring Officer. There is no right of appeal against the Monitoring Officer's decision to refuse the Complainant's request for confidentiality.
- 5.13 If the complaint relates to an employee or is a service related issue, the Monitoring Officer will refer the complaint to the relevant service in order for them to respond to

the complainant directly. The complainant will be informed about the corporate complaints process.

- 5.14 In any case where the Monitoring Officer decides that the complaint cannot be considered under these arrangements, they will write to the complainant explaining why this is the case. There is no appeal process for decisions taken by the Monitoring Officer at this stage.
- 5.15 Many matters can be appropriately and satisfactorily dealt with without the need for an investigation, for example by the Monitoring Officer issuing written or verbal advice to others. If the Monitoring Officer judges that the matter can be appropriately and satisfactorily dealt with in this way, an investigation will not take place.
- 5.16 If the Monitoring Officer considers that some form of investigation is necessary, they will give consideration as to whether that investigation will be done informally. Wherever possible, the Monitoring Officer will endeavour to deal with complaints in this way.
- 5.17 Alternatively, the Monitoring Officer may judge that the complaint merits formal investigation. This decision may be made immediately or it may be made after the Monitoring Officer has taken informal action but has ultimately decided this insufficient.
- 5.18 The Monitoring Officer will always consult the Independent Person before making the decision to commission a formal investigation (and may consult the IP at any other time they choose to).
- 5.19 The Monitoring Officer will inform the councillor or co-opted Member being complained about of receipt of the allegation and its details and of their right to consult the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person if the matter progresses to a formal investigation stage. Where the Monitoring Officer has taken a decision, they will inform the complainant, the councillor and the Independent Person of their decision in writing and the reasons for that decision.
- 5.20 Where an informal approach is taken, the Monitoring Officer will aim to resolve and close the complaint within 30 working days. Where matters progress to a formal stage, the timescales will depend upon the detail of the complaint and also the availability of the various parties involved to engage with the investigation process. However, the Monitoring Officer reserves the right to progress the complaint in the absence of input from any party, especially where it is clear that individuals are deliberately choosing not to engage or to engage unreasonably slowly with the process.
- 5.21 Where additional information is required in order to come to a decision, the Monitoring Officer may come back to the complainant or the councillor being complained about for such information.
- 5.22 In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally without the need for a formal investigation. Such informal resolution may involve the councillor accepting that their conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology or other remedial action by the authority. Where the councillor or the authority make a reasonable offer of local resolution, but the complainant is not willing to accept that offer, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

5.23 If the complaint alleges criminal conduct or breach of other regulation by any person, including the alleged non-disclosure of disclosable pecuniary interests, the Monitoring Officer has the power to call in the Police and other regulatory agencies and may determine that it is not possible to commence their own investigation until the Police or other regulatory agencies have concluded their own investigations of the matter. At this stage, any media enquiries will be advised that a review of a complaint is in process and that it would not be appropriate to comment.

6. How is the investigation conducted?

- 6.1 If the Monitoring Officer decides that a complaint merits formal investigation, they will appoint an Investigating Officer who may be an officer of another authority or an external investigator. The Investigating Officer will decide whether they need to meet or speak to the complainant to understand the nature of the complaint and so that they can explain their understanding of events and suggest what documents the Investigating Officer needs to see and who the Investigating Officer needs to interview.
- 6.2 The Investigating Officer would normally write to the councillor being complained about and provide them with a copy of the complaint and an explanation of the arrangements for the investigation and ask the councillor to provide their explanation of events and to identify what documents they need to see and who they need to interview.
- 6.3 At the end of their investigation, the Investigating Officer will produce a draft report and will send copies of that draft report, in confidence, to the complainant and to the councillor being complained about, to give them both an opportunity to identify any matter in that draft report which they disagree with or which they consider requires more consideration. The report will include details of the allegation, the evidence considered and the investigation's findings.
- 6.4 Having received and taken account of any comments that the complainant and councillor being complained about may make on the draft report, the Investigating Officer will send their final report to the Monitoring Officer which will include their findings as to whether there may have been a breach of the Code of Conduct.

7. What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is no evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?

- 7.1 The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and, if they are satisfied that it is sufficient, the Monitoring Officer will write to the complainant and to the councillor being complained about (and to the Town or Parish Council where the complaint relates to a Town or Parish Councillor), to advise that they are satisfied that no further investigative action is required and to provide a copy of the Investigating Officer's final report. If the Monitoring Officer is not satisfied that the investigation has been conducted properly, they may ask the Investigating Officer to reconsider their report. The Monitoring Officer will ask the Independent Person to comment on the investigation report.

8. What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?

The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and will then either send the matter for local hearing before the Hearings Panel or, after consulting the Independent Person, seek local resolution.

Local Resolution

- 8.1 The Monitoring Officer may consider that the matter can reasonably be resolved without the need for a hearing. In such a case, he/she will consult with the Independent Person and with the complainant to discuss what they consider to be a fair resolution which also helps to ensure higher standards of conduct for the future. Such resolution may include the councillor accepting that their conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology and/or other remedial action by the authority. If the councillor complies with the suggested resolution, the Monitoring Officer will report the matter to the Standards Committee Chair.

Panel Hearing

- 8.2 If the Monitoring Officer considers that local resolution is not appropriate, or the complainant states that they are not satisfied by the proposed resolution, or the councillor concerned is not prepared to undertake any proposed remedial action, such as giving an apology, then the Monitoring Officer will report the Investigating Officer's report to a Hearings Panel of three Councillors drawn from the Standards and General Purposes Committee, which will conduct a local hearing before deciding whether the councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and, if so, whether to take any action in respect of the councillor. In the case of a complaint involving a Town or Parish Councillor, as well as the three Councillors, there will be a Town or Parish Councillor attending as a non-voting Councillor.
- 8.3 At the hearing, the Investigating Officer will present their report, call such witnesses as they consider necessary and make representations to substantiate their conclusion that the councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct. For this purpose, the Investigating Officer may ask the complainant to attend and give evidence to the Hearings Panel. The councillor will then have an opportunity to give their evidence, to call witnesses and to make representations to the Hearings Panel as to why they consider that they did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct.
- 8.4 The Hearings Panel, with the benefit of any prior advice in writing from the Independent Person, may conclude that the councillor did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct and so dismiss the complaint. If the Hearings Panel concludes that the councillor did fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Chair will inform the councillor of this finding and the Hearings Panel will then consider what action, if any, the Hearings Panel should take as a result of the councillor's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. In doing this, the Hearings Panel will give the councillor an opportunity to make representations in writing to the Panel and will consult the Independent Person, but will then decide what action, if any, to take in respect of the matter.
- 8.5 Meetings of the Hearings Panel will be held in public unless the Monitoring Officer agrees there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this. The agenda for the meeting will be published 5 clear working days in advance of the hearing meeting. Meeting papers that do not contain exempt information will be shared with all

councillors of the panel, the Independent Person, the Investigating Officer and any witnesses. Meeting papers will not be shared in advance with the press and public but will be made available at the commencement of the hearing.

9. What action can the Hearings Panel take where it finds that a councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct?

The Council has delegated to the Hearings Panel such of its powers to take action in respect of individual Waverley councillors as necessary to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Accordingly the Hearings Panel may:

- 9.1 publish its findings in respect of the councillor's conduct;
- 9.2 report its findings to Council or to the Town or Parish Council for information;
- 9.3 recommend to the councillor's Group Leader (or in the case of un-grouped councillors, recommend to Council or to Committees) that they be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;
- 9.4 recommend to the Leader of the Council that the councillor be removed from the Executive, or removed from particular Portfolio responsibilities;
- 9.5 instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange training for the councillor;
- 9.6 remove the Councillor from all outside appointments to which they have been appointed or nominated by the authority or by the Parish Council;
- 9.7 withdraw, facilities provided to the councillor by the Council, such as a computer, website and/or email and Internet access; or
- 9.8 exclude, the councillor from the Council's offices or other premises, with the exception of meeting rooms as necessary for attending Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

The Hearings Panel has no power to suspend or disqualify the councillor or to withdraw councillors' allowances or special responsibility allowances.

In the case of Town or Parish complaints, the conclusion will be referred to that Town or Parish Council for such action they consider appropriate.

10. What happens at the end of the hearing?

- 10.1 At the end of the hearing, the Chair will state the decision of the Hearings Panel as to whether the councillor failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and as to any actions which the Hearings Panel resolves to take.
- 10.2 As soon as reasonably practicable thereafter, the Monitoring Officer shall prepare a formal decision notice in consultation with the Chair of the Hearings Panel and send a copy to the complainant, to the councillor and the Independent Person and make that decision notice available for public inspection and report the decision to the next convenient meeting of the Council. The decision will also be placed on the Waverley Borough Council website, unless no breach is found and the councillor requests it should not be publicised.

11. Who is on the Hearings Panel?

The Hearings Panel is drawn from the councillors appointed by the Council to the Standards and General Purposes Committee. The Independent Person's views are sought and taken into consideration before the Hearings Panel takes any decision on whether the councillor's conduct constitutes a failure to comply with the Code of conduct and as to any action to be taken following a finding of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.

12. Who is the 'Independent Person'?

- 12.1 Waverley Borough Council has appointed five Independent Persons. These are members of the Community who have applied for the post following advertisement of a vacancy for the post and have been appointed by a positive vote from a majority of all the councillors of Council.
- 12.2 A person cannot be "independent" if they:
- 12.2.1 are, or have been within the past five years, a councillor, co-opted member or officer of the Council; or
 - 12.2.2 are, or have been within the past five years, a councillor, co-opted member or officer of a parish council of which the authority is the principal authority; or
 - 12.2.3 are a relative, or close friend, of a person within paragraph (a) or (b) above.
 - 12.2.4 For this purpose, "relative" means:
 - i. spouse or civil partner;
 - ii. living with the other person as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners;
 - iii. grandparent of the other person;
 - iv. a lineal descendent of a grandparent of the other person;
 - v. a parent, sibling or child of a person within paragraphs 12.2.1 or 12.2.2;
 - vi. a spouse or civil partner of a person within paragraphs (iii), (iv), or (v); or
 - vii. living with a person within paragraphs (iii), (iv) or (v) as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners.
- 12.3 The role of the independent person is set out in Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011. As part of its arrangements under which decisions on allegations can be made, each principal authority must appoint at least one independent person.
- 12.4 The views of an Independent Person **must** be sought by the Council before it takes a decision on whether an allegation may be investigated and **may** be sought by the Council at any other stage (for example, before a final hearing is arranged or where a local resolution may be appropriate). Where the authority voluntarily chooses to seek the Independent Person's views on an allegation that it has not decided to investigate, there is no requirement for the authority to take the views of the Independent Person into account.

12.5 If a matter progresses to the formal investigation stage, a councillor against whom an allegation has been made has the right to consult the Independent Person should they wish to do so.

13. Review of these arrangements

The Council may by resolution agree to amend these arrangements and has delegated to the Chair of the Hearings Panel the right to depart from these arrangements where they consider that it is expedient to do so in order to secure the effective and fair consideration of any matter. The Council will keep these arrangements under review and identify any improvements to the processes and ensure that they are helping the Council maintain high standards of conduct.

14. Appeals

- (a) There is no right of appeal for the complainant against a decision of the Monitoring Officer or of the Hearings Panel.
- (b) If the Councillor or co-opted member wishes to appeal against the decision of the Hearings Panel, they will have a right to have the decision reviewed by another three councillors of the Standards Panel who have not been involved. The Monitoring Officer will determine whether this will either involve a full rehearing of the case or be dealt with by way of written representation from the councillor. Appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the conclusion of Panel Hearing.

15. The complainant's right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman

If the complainant feels that the authority has failed to deal with their complaint properly, they may make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. <https://www.lgo.org.uk/contact-us>. The Ombudsman will not re-hear the complaint but will consider whether Waverley Borough Council has dealt with it properly. They will not consider complaints from the public until the authority has gone through its own process and reached a conclusion.