

WHPC Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Item 23/247

Code of Conduct Complaints

**Purpose:** To consider the impact of EDDC's complaint handling during the period 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### **Background**

1. West Hill Parish Council's Complaints Policy (section 3) sets out types of complaint outside the scope of the Council. In particular, section 3c states:
  - Members' (*Councillors'*) conduct alleged to breach the Code of Conduct adopted by the Parish Council (Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against Councillors may be obtained from The Monitoring Officer, Legal and Democratic Services, East Devon District Council, Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Industrial Estate, Honiton EX14 1EJ)
2. The East Devon District Council (EDDC)
  - a. The EDDC Monitoring Officer is responsible for the management of complaints against District, Town and Parish Councillors. An overview of the complaint handling process is published on the EDDC website [Complaints procedure - Introduction - East Devon](#).

**It is important to note that this is a confidential process.**

EDDC's published process states: "Once the Monitoring Officer is satisfied that sufficient information has been provided, the Subject Member will be notified of the complaint and given the opportunity to respond".

- b. The timescales for the EDDC investigation of complaints is not clear.
  - c. Five out of seven scheduled meetings of the EDDC Standards Committee were postponed/cancelled between 1-Jan-2022 and 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023.
  - d. In May 2023 a new Monitoring Officer was appointed following the resignation of the former role holder.
3. West Hill Parish Council

During 2022-23 a resident has advised of their intention to submit Code of Conduct complaints against current and former WHPC Councillors?

  - a. What became of them? Were they submitted? Validated? Investigated?
  - b. The Parish Council or Councillors have not been contacted by EDDC.
  - c. The Parish Council has made enquiries but is no clearer regards the situation.

The delays and lack of clarity caused/causes considerable anguish to Councillors and Clerk, and reputational damage to WHPC.

4. Confidential Item: Known Code of Conduct complaints made against current or former members of West Hill Parish Council.

### **For consideration**

- **Has EDDC treated West Hill Parish Council, Councillors and staff with respect?**
- **What actions, if appropriate, does the Council wish to take?**