

PROCEDURE FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE PANELS WHEN DEALING WITH MULTIPLE OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

MULTIPLE COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE SAME INCIDENT

A number of complaints about the same matter may be considered by the Assessment Panel at the same meeting. If so, the Monitoring Officer will present one report to the Panel which draws together all the relevant information and highlights any substantively different or contradictory information. The Assessment Panel will still reach a decision on each individual complaint and follow the notification procedure for each complaint.

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS

The Assessment Panel will consider every new complaint that they receive in relation to the Code of Conduct. A person may make frequent allegations about members, most of which may not have any substance but despite this new allegations must still be considered as they may contain a complaint that requires some action to be taken. However, if the Panel has already dealt with the same complaint by the same person and the Monitoring Officer does not believe that there is any new evidence, then a complaint does not need to be considered by the Panel.

IDENTIFYING VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS OR COMPLAINERS

A vexatious complaint or complainant can usually be identified through the following patterns of behaviour, which may become apparent in the complaints process:

- Repeated complaints making the same, or broadly similar, complaints against the same member or members about the same alleged incident
- Use of aggressive or repetitive language of an obsessive nature
- Repeated complaints that disclose no potential breach of the Code
- Where it seems clear that there is an ulterior motive for a complaint or complaints
- Where a complainant refuses to let the matter rest once the complaints process (including the review stage) has been exhausted.

If any of the above patterns of behaviour become evident in dealing with a complaint or complainant the Monitoring Officer may decide that a vexatious complainant should deal with only one named officer or refuse email communication. In extreme circumstances only very limited further contact will be permitted with the council.