

Standards Complaint Statistics – 1.4.23 to 31.3.24

Updated 7 March 2025

North Yorkshire Council (NYC) is a unitary authority which came into being on 1 April 2023 (Vesting Day) following local government reorganisation. There is therefore no recorded information held for North Yorkshire Council prior to 1 April 2023 as NYC was not in existence at that time.

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer support the Council's Standards and Governance Committee in promoting high standards of conduct within the authority, including the handling of complaints that an elected/voting co-opted Member of North Yorkshire Council or one of the parish and town councils in the county may have breached the relevant code of conduct for Members ("standards complaints"). References throughout to "the Monitoring Officer" include reference to the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Within North Yorkshire there are currently:

- 729 Individual Parishes
- 412 Parish and Town Councils, including Harrogate and Scarborough
- 160 Parish Meetings; and
- 90 NYC councillors.

National context

- NYC has the largest number of parish and town councils of any local authority in the country
- The next nearest council has 327 – Somerset Council
- 51% have less than 30
- 97.5% of councils have less than 200
- There are only 6 councils with over 200 parish councils
- Only 2 councils have over 300 parish councils

North Yorkshire context

NYC is one of the largest local authorities in the country, in terms of geographic area, and there is a significant number of the smallest form of parish sector organisations, parish meetings (24%). Overall, parish sector organisations are generally smaller and charge a smaller precept (if any) than other similar councils. This uniquely larger number of parish sector organisations are spread over a significantly large rural area and generally have very limited resources.

- Within the NYC area the average precept charge is 75% less than the national average (£20,212)
- 46.6% of parish councils have total annual precept income less than £5k
- Only 5.6% (28) parish councils have total annual precept income more than £100k
- Only 4 (0.8%) parish councils have total annual precept income more than £300k

Context for standards complaint statistics

Complaints are recorded individually. The complaints recorded can therefore represent the same complaint from the same complainant against several members of the same council.

All complaints that a Member may have breached the relevant authority's code of conduct for Members ('standards complaints') are considered by the Monitoring Officer to ascertain they are suitable to progress to formal assessment by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with an Independent Person for Standards, in accordance with the Council's standards complaints procedure. The procedure explains the circumstances whereby a complaint will not generally progress to a formal assessment. The initial consideration by the Monitoring Officer will ensure that there is an appropriate, proportionate, balance between maintaining high ethical standards and protecting the public purse and Council resources in terms of officer, Member and Independent Person time spent in handling standards complaints. For the purposes of the statistics, the pre-

assessment consideration outcomes by the Monitoring Officer are included in the figures for overall assessment outcomes.

On a formal assessment, the Monitoring Officer will consider, in consultation with the Independent Person, whether a complaint falls within jurisdiction, disclosing a potential breach of the Code and, if so, whether the complaint warrants any further action being taken in relation to it. The Council's standards complaints procedure provides wherever possible the Monitoring Officer will seek to resolve a complaint informally without the need for formal investigation or referral to the Standards and Governance Committee.

The assessment is not an investigation and makes no determination as to the truth or otherwise of the allegations. All formal standards complaints must go through this initial filter stage (unless the substance of the complaint has previously been considered under the Standards and Governance Committee Protocol regarding Unreasonably Persistent/Vexatious Complainant behaviour).

The Standards and Governance Committee would only be involved at assessment stage if the Monitoring Officer had a conflict of interests or if the Monitoring Officer considered that assessment by the full Committee would be appropriate. This is set out in the standards complaints procedure. Further information is published on the Council's website - [Councillors' code of conduct | North Yorkshire Council](#).

The Council's standards complaints procedure also provides that for matters referred for investigation, the officer nominated to investigate the matter will produce a report which is sent to the parties and the Monitoring Officer. The report will conclude with a recommendation as to whether, on the balance of probabilities, it is considered that there is evidence of a breach of the Code.

Where evidence of a potential breach of the Code is found by the investigating officer, the Monitoring Officer will review the report and consult the Independent Person as to whether local resolution may be possible and, if it is believed so, the Monitoring Officer will consult the parties. If any suggested resolution is not agreed or informal resolution is not appropriate, the complaint will be referred to a Hearings Panel of the Standards and Governance Committee for consideration and determination.

Standards complaints statistics

Total Number of Standards Complaints Brought for the Period 1.4.23 – 31.3.24

174

Complaints by Type of Subject Member

145 complaints received which related to parish/town councillors

29 complaints received which related to NYC councillors

Assessment Outcomes

140 complaints were assessed to require no action:
116 re parish/town councillors; 24 re NYC councillors

5 complaints were dealt with by way of informal resolution
3 re parish/town councillors; 2 re NYC councillors

28 complaints were referred for investigation
25 re parish/town councillors; 3 re NYC councillors

1 complaint was not pursued, withdrawn, or otherwise
closed concerning a parish/town councillor

Number of complaints referred for investigation

28 complaints referred for investigation

Outcome of Investigation Reports

2 investigation reports found no evidence of a breach of the Code
both relating to a parish/town councillor

16 investigation reports found evidence of a breach of the Code
13 re parish/town councillors; 3 re NYC councillors

0 complaint investigation reports where the Monitoring Officer and
Independent Person for Standards agreed the matter should be resolved
informally

16 complaint investigation reports where the Monitoring Officer and Independent
Person for Standards agreed the matter should be referred to the Standards and
Governance Committee Hearings Panel for determination

Note: The final investigation report outcomes for the 2023/24 municipal year cannot yet be confirmed, as there are **10** ongoing investigations concerning complaints that were brought within that time period. It is therefore not yet known if any further complaints will be referred to the Hearings Panel for determination.

Determinations by Standards and Governance Committee Hearings Panel

16 complaints referred to the Hearings Panel for determination

11 of those complaints - no breach of the Code was found

5 of those complaints - a breach of the Code was found

16 complaints considered by the Hearings Panel were subject to recommendations being made to the relevant authority

15 complaints were considered and determined by the Hearings Panel in private

Note: The final number of determined complaints for the 2023/24 municipal year cannot yet be confirmed as there are **10** ongoing investigations concerning complaints that were brought in that time period, the outcomes for which have not yet been determined. The Council will update its statistics as complaint outcomes are determined.

Sanctions by Standards and Governance Committee Hearings Panel

5 complaints where a breach of the Code was found

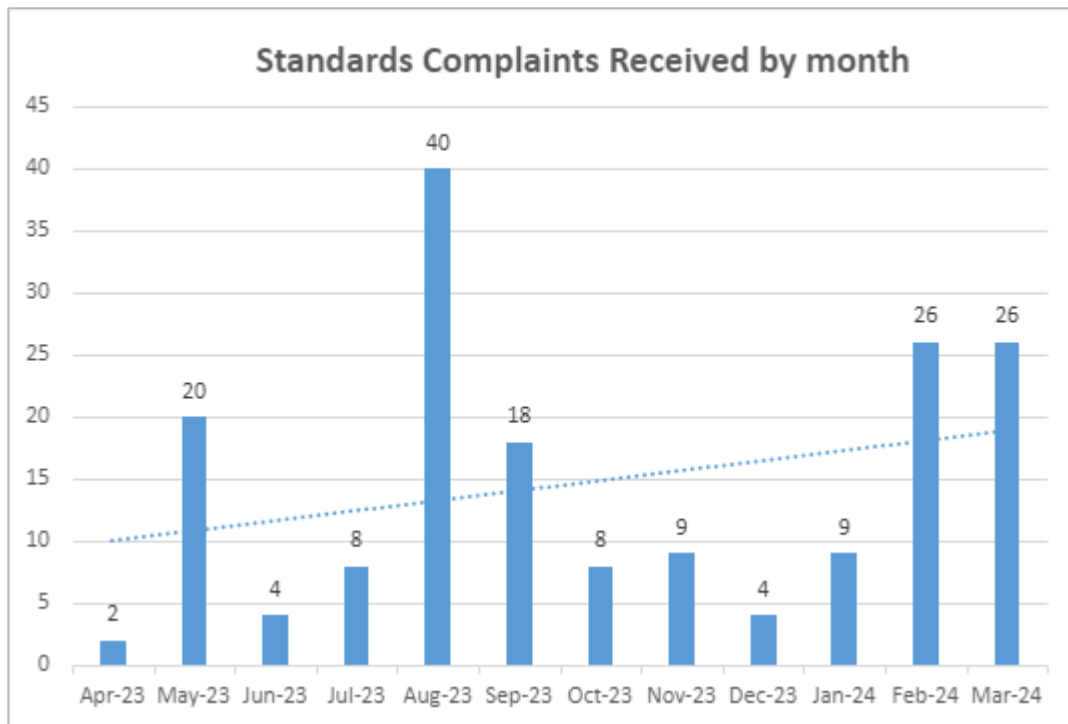
4 of those complaints where sanctions were imposed/recommended

1 of those complaints where a censure of the subject Member was imposed/recommended

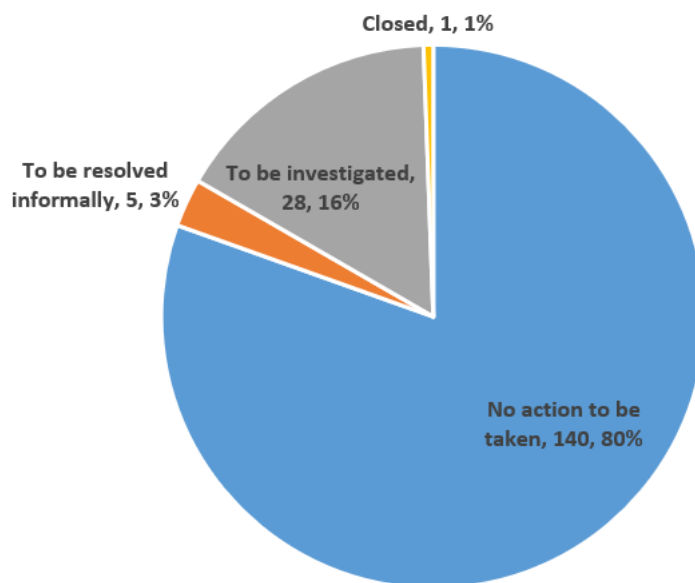
2 of those complaints where an apology from the subject Member was imposed/recommended

2 of those complaints where training for the subject Member was imposed/recommended

0 where a recommendation was made to the subject Member's Group Leader for the subject Member to be removed from committees/sub-committees



Complaint Outcome - All Complaints



Comparison of Complaints made against North Yorkshire Councillors and Parish/Town Councillors

