



## Reading Borough Council

### Standards Committee - Assessment Criteria

- 1 Unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainants**
  - 1.1 A small number of people, known as unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants, might abuse the opportunity to complain against members by, for example:
    - a) Making repeated complaints about broadly the same matter;
    - b) Making frequent complaints which have very little substance;
    - c) Refusing to let a matter rest when it has been substantially dealt with;
    - d) Being aggressive, offensive or obsessive;
    - e) Having a clear and inappropriate ulterior motive; or,
    - f) Otherwise causing a response where the public cost and time involved is disproportionate to the matters raised.
  - 1.2 The Monitoring Officer will assess whether a person should be declared unreasonable and unreasonably persistent and how that person should be dealt with in the future. This cannot effect the person's legal entitlements but might include, among any other appropriate response:
    - a) Creating a single named point of contact for the person to communicate with the Council.
    - b) Refusing to accept emails, telephone calls or any other form of contact, provided one means of contact is maintained.
    - c) Notifying all relevant Members and officers that any attempted communication should be referred to the single point of contact.
    - d) Giving a summary response to multiple complaints, rather than dealing with them point by point.

- e) Refusing to respond further to matters substantially dealt with unless there is significant new evidence.
  - f) Rejecting complaints as vexatious, frivolous or politically motivated.
- 1.3 Responses will make appropriate allowance for any equality and diversity related issues such as cultural barriers, language barriers, disability barriers (including learning disabilities), etc.
- 1.4 If the complainant has special needs (e.g. language needs, learning disability, etc.), an interpreter (including British Sign Language) and/or advocate might be helpful to both parties; and an offer to help the complainant find someone independent will be considered.
- 1.5 Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants may make a complaint against a Member for alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, and where this happens:
- a) The single point of contact will be the Monitoring Officer
  - b) Multiple or related complaints may be considered by the Monitoring Officer at the same time through a single process.
  - c) If the Standards Committee has already dealt with the same complaint, with no significant new evidence, the complaint may not be further considered.
  - d) Vexatious, frivolous or politically motivated complaints, or those which otherwise abuse the procedure, may not be considered further unless they also raise a serious matter which ought to be considered in the public interest.
  - e) Individual complainants will be given a warning about their behaviour and an opportunity to modify this before any restrictions are applied.
  - f) Individual complainants will be informed of the decision to invoke the policy, the implications this will have for that individual, how long the restrictions will last for, when the matter will be reviewed by the Standards Committee.
  - g) Any restrictions do not prevent the individual complainant from requesting/assessing day to day services or assessing their local councillor(s). Ensuring (where applicable) that designated contact arrangements are kept up to date.