

The Highland Council
Audit & Scrutiny Committee
17 November 2015

Agenda Item	7
Report No	AS/29/15

Annual Report of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development

Summary

This report presents a summary of the Commissioner's Annual Report for 2014/15 for Members information.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Commission for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland was established on 1 April 2011 and comprises the Public Standards Commissioner for Scotland and the Public Appointments Commissioner for Scotland.
- 1.2 The Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland has published his annual report for 2014/15. This report provides an overview of the Commissioner's statutory role which includes investigating and reporting on complaints, against Councillors, which allege contravention of the Councillors Code of Conduct.
- 1.3 A copy of the Annual Report can be found at www.publicstandardscommissioner.org.uk and its conclusions, in respect of Councillors, are summarised below for Members' information.

2. 2014/15 Annual Report

- 2.1 During this year there were 680 complaints made against Councillors in Scotland which was an increase from the 298 received in 2013/14. However 525 complaints relating to misuse of council facilities actually referred to the same issue.
- 2.2 The most common complaints related to misconduct on individual planning applications (44), disrespect of councillors/officials/employees (33), breach of key principles (30) and failure to register or declare an interest (26). A total of 81 complaints related to planning.
- 2.3 During the year 692 complaints (inc. those against members of devolved public bodies) were investigated and the outcomes were:-
- 540 Breach
 - 17 No Breach
 - 123 Not Pursued

- 10 Outside Jurisdiction
- 2 Withdrawn

Details of the cases which were considered a breach of the Code and the sanctions imposed by the Commission are contained within the report.

3. Complaints against Highland Councillors

- 3.1 At its meeting on 18 June 2015 the Audit & Scrutiny Committee considered a report regarding complaints made against Highland Councillors which were concluded during 2014/15. This confirmed that 5 complaints were made and the Standards Commission did not uphold any of these complaints and that no Councillors were found to have breached the Code of Conduct.

4. Implications

- 4.1 There are no Resource; Legal; Equalities; Climate Change/Carbon Clever; Risk or Gaelic and Rural implications.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider and note the content of the Public Commissioner's Annual Report.

Designation: Depute Chief Executive

Date: 2 November 2015

Author: Michelle Morris

Background Papers: