

The Highland Council
Audit & Scrutiny Committee
20 November 2014

Agenda Item	8
Report No	AS/30/14

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 2013/14 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 2013/14. 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. 2013/14 Annual Report

- 2.1 During this year there were 298 complaints made against Councillors in Scotland which was an increase from the 181 received in 2012/13. The most common complaints related to misconduct on individual applications, failure to register or declare an interest, breach of key principles and disrespect of councillors/officials/employees. Complaints in all these categories had risen from the previous year.
- 2.2 Complaints relating to planning were again the most common rising to 139 (compared with 73 in 2012/13) and the majority of complaints were from members of the public.
- 2.3 The majority of complaints (200) were not pursued further, 67 were concluded as 'no breach' while 5 were concluded to have breached the Code and were reported to the Commission. Others were outwith the Commissioners jurisdiction or withdrawn.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 in June 2014 the Audit & Scrutiny Committee considered a report regarding complaints made against Highland Councillors which were concluded during 2013/14. 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: 10 November 2014

Author: Michelle Morris

Background Papers: