
ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AND MEMBER STANDARDS – UPDATE REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members on issues relevant to member standards and ethical governance.

Summary

2. The report gives update information about issues relevant to member standards since matters were reported to the Committee in June.
3. Also set out in the report are a number of datasets of ethical indicators to assist in monitoring the ethical health of the Council. By reviewing these indicators it is hoped to be able to identify any unusual or significant trends or changes in the volume of data recorded for the relevant period that might provide an alert to any deterioration in the ethical health of the authority.
4. There are no particular issues of concern that have been identified from reviewing the data.

Recommendation

5. Members are asked to note the information presented (including the new graphical presentation of the data sets) and to comment as appropriate.

Reason

6. By having information of this nature it is believed that the Audit Committee will be able to get a better picture of the ethical health of the authority.

**Paul Wildsmith
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

Background Papers

None

Luke Swinhoe: Extension 5490

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific issues which relate to crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	There is no specific health and well being impact.
Carbon Impact	There is no specific carbon impact.
Diversity	There is no specific diversity impact.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	There is no specific relevance to the strategy beyond a reflection on the Council's ethical governance arrangements.
Efficiency	There is no specific efficiency impact.

MAIN REPORT

Overview

7. On the 20 March 2014 Council considered a report about a review of member standards and agreed, amongst other matters, that the Audit Committee is given additional responsibility for ethical values as part of its remit and that a review of member conduct is reported to Council annually. It has been agreed that a report will be taken to the Audit Committee twice a year to provide Members with information.
8. This report gives an update on the current position relating to member standards.
9. More general Information is also provided on matters relating to member standards and ethical governance to help in giving Members of this Committee information on the ethical health of the authority.

Member Standards

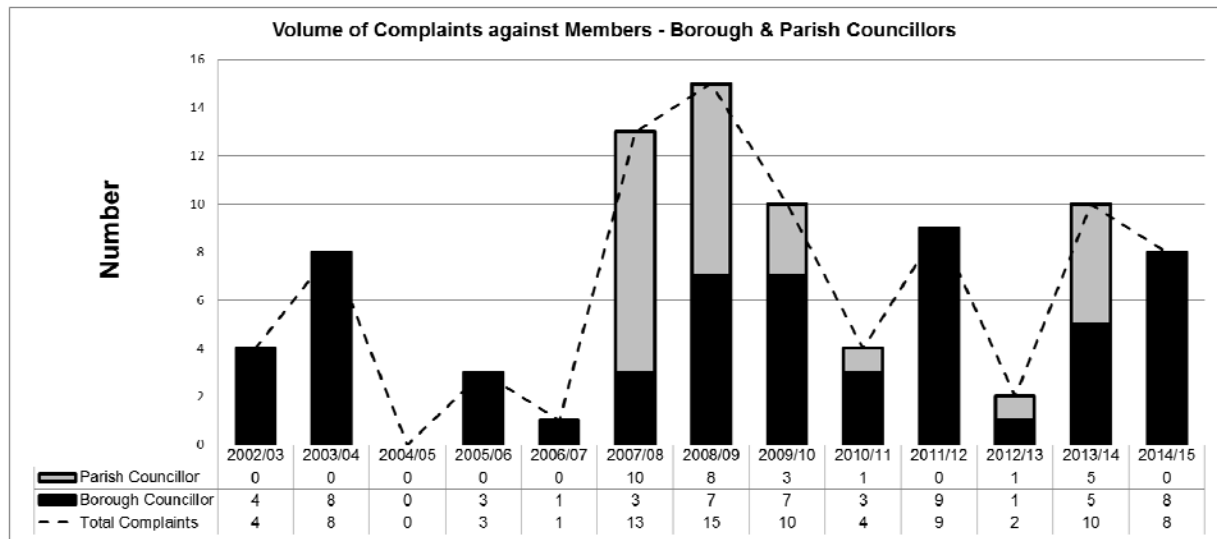
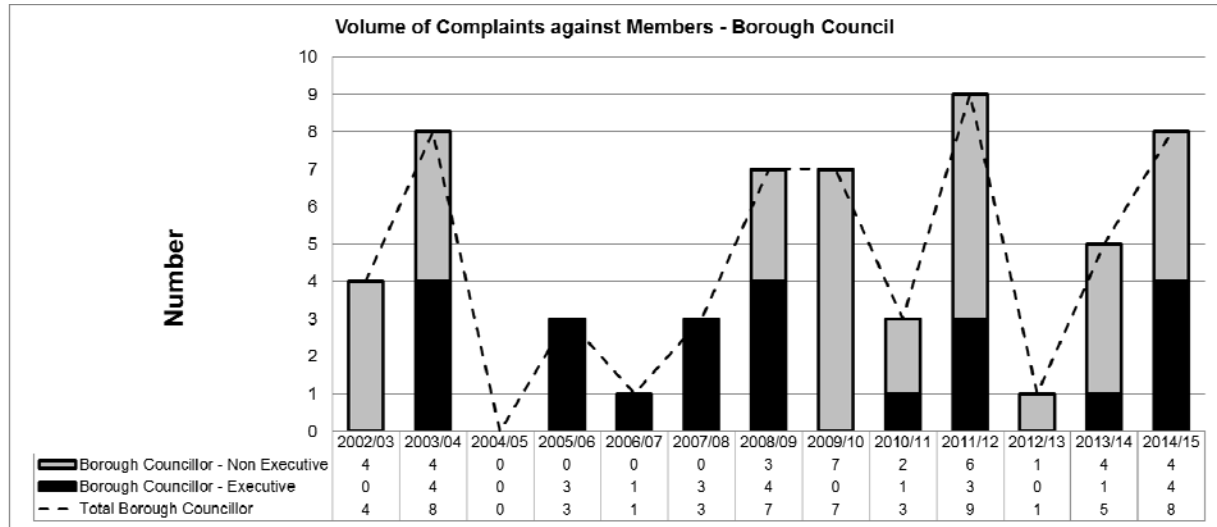
10. Following the May local government elections training sessions on the Code of Conduct were held on 20 and 27 May and the 2 July for all members of the Council. For parish council two sessions about the Code of Conduct were held on 29 May 2015.
11. Completed register of interests forms, both for Borough Council Members and parish council members have been uploaded onto the website to facilitate transparency and for public viewing.
12. Following the departure of the Assistant Chief Executive at the end of August 2015 the Head of Legal Services was been appointed as the Monitoring Officer. This post carries particular responsibility for member conduct, dealing with complaints and advising members.

13. The Monitoring Officer granted a dispensation to enable members with disclosable pecuniary interests (16 members were trade union members and one was a union employee) to participate in a motion concerning the Trade Union Bill at Council on 19 November 2015. This was granted under S.33 of the Localism Act 2011, had this not been granted there would have been a significant adverse impact on the representation and participation of one political group at the meeting.

Ethical indicators

14. Set out in Appendix 1 are a range of data sets that it is hoped will assist in monitoring the ethical health of the Council. By reviewing the indicators it will be possible to identify any unusual or significant changes in the volume of data recorded for the relevant period that might provide an alert to any deterioration in the ethical health of the authority.
15. .As requested by Members, the datasets of ethical indicators are now set out in graphical format rather than relying exclusively on a tabulated format. It is hope that this changed format will make it easier to view the data.
16. Member's observations about the way that the information is presented as well as the content are invited.

Member Complaints



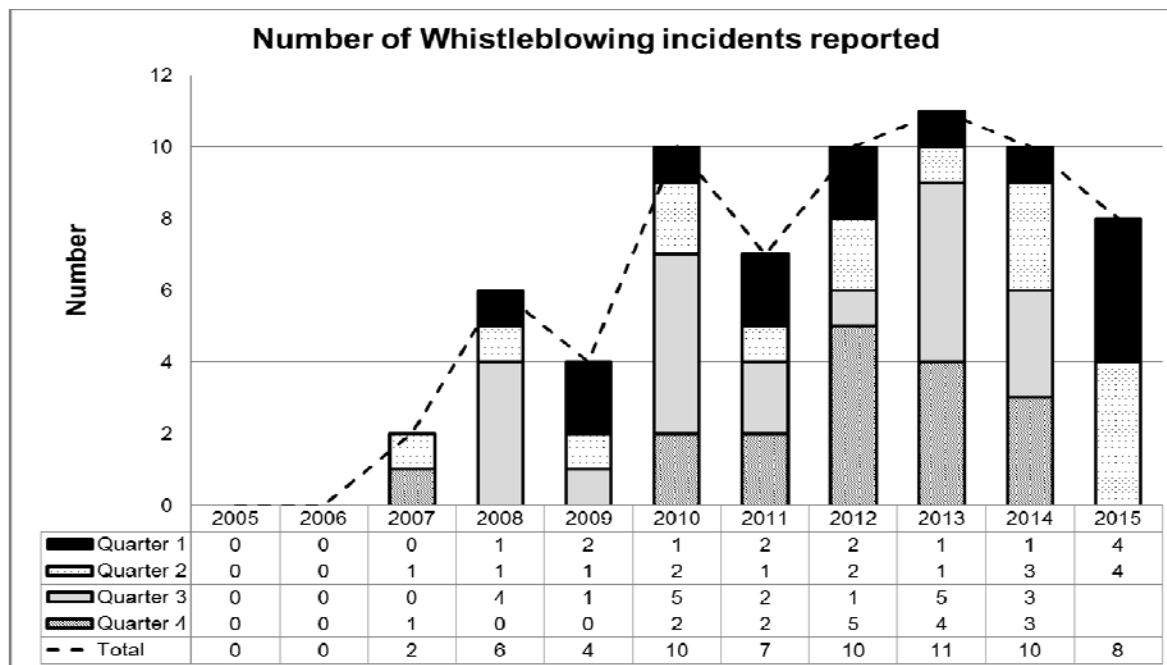
Comments

The average number of complaints per year from May 2008 (when the local assessment of complaints was introduced) to April 2015 is about 8.3 per year.

Interpreting the information needs a degree of caution. In 2008 to 2009 a significant factor was a large number of complaints emanating from one parish council which impacted on the yearly figures and also the average numbers of complaints received for that period. There were particular local circumstances that accounted for the rise.

Over the period from 2002/3 to 2014/15 there have been 28 complaints made in respect of Parish Councillors and for the same period 59 complaints relating to Borough

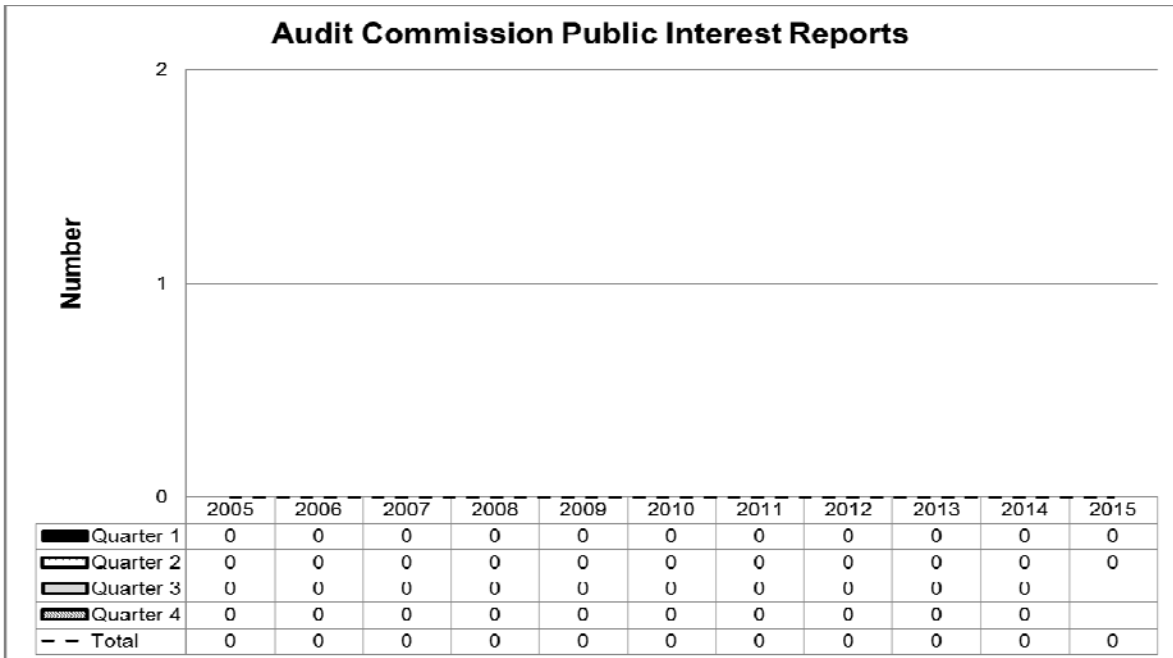
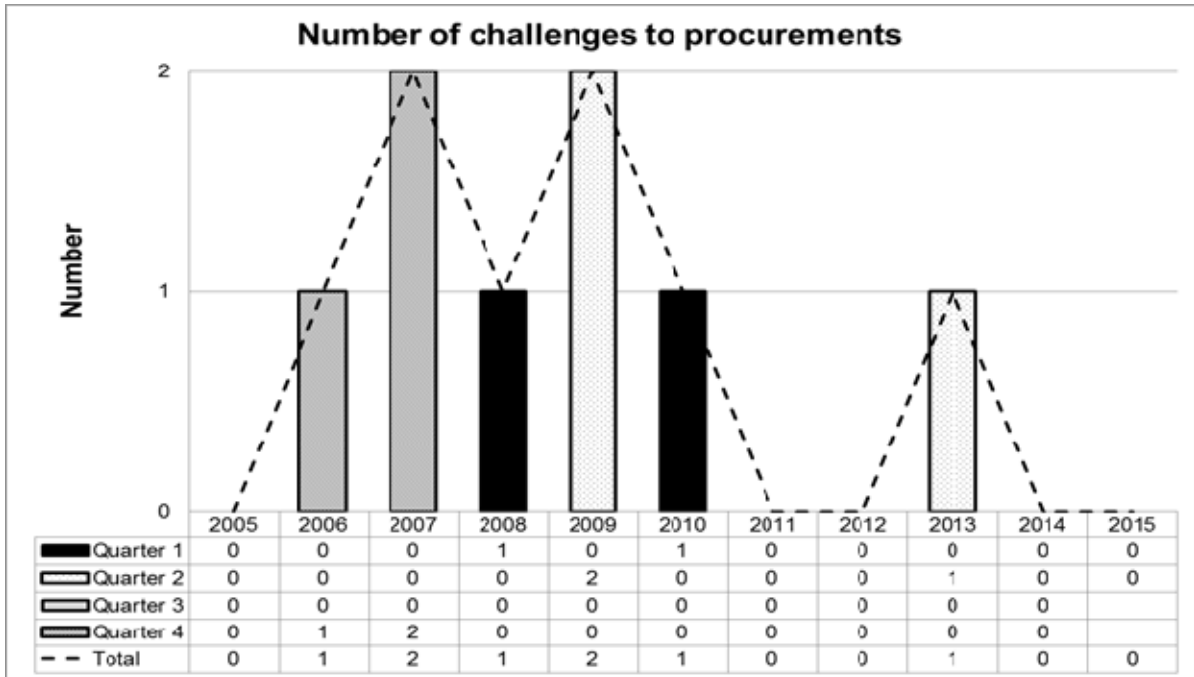
Councillors. The fact that there are more complaints in respect of Borough Council members is perhaps unsurprising given the types of decisions they are involved in making and the more prominent role that they play compared to parish councillors.

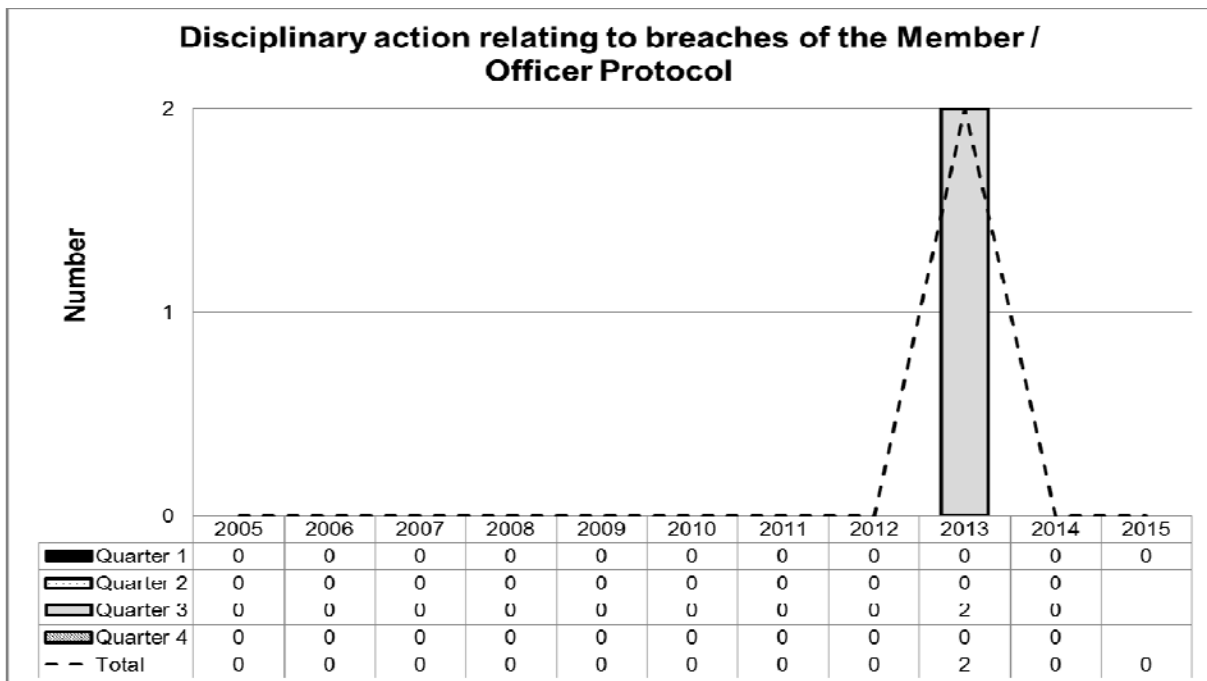
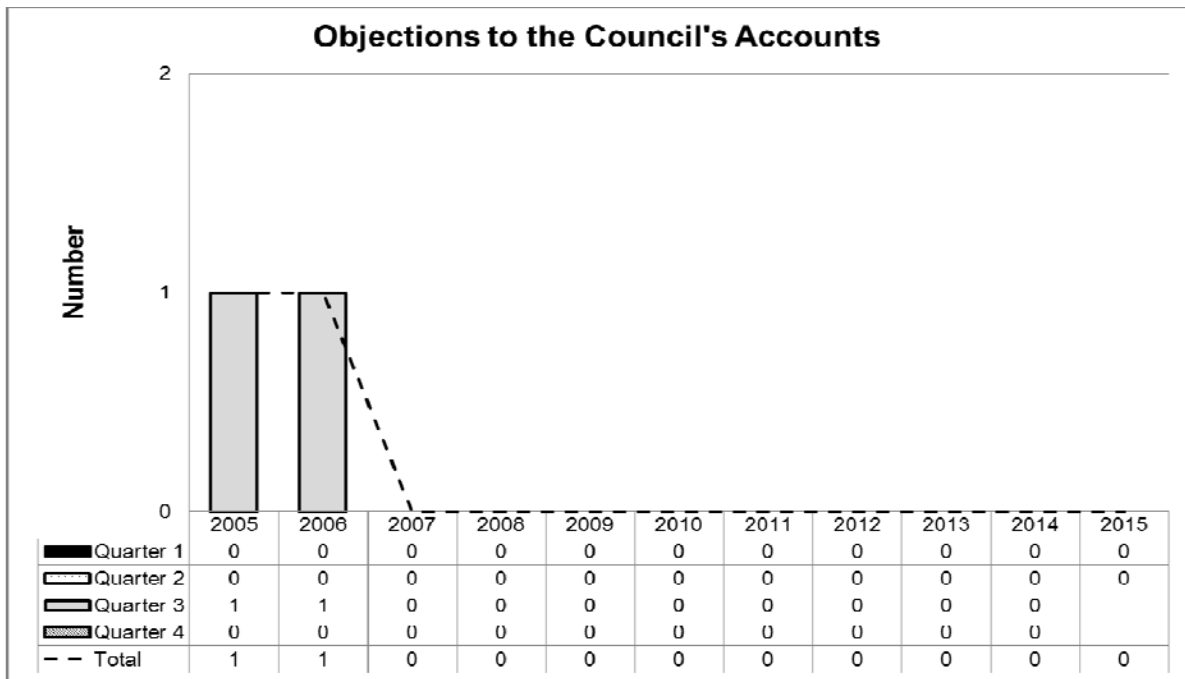


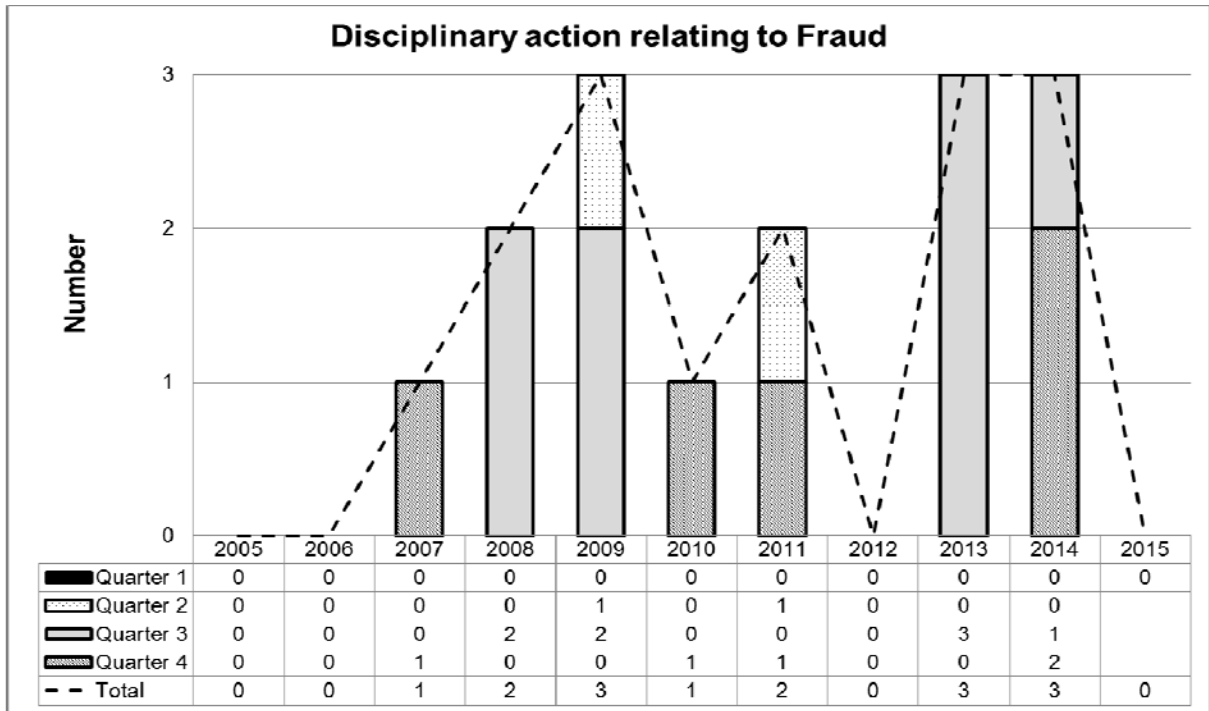
Comments

In 2008 a publicity campaign was launched and the Fraud Hotline set up.

The increase over previous years may have to do with the, increasing awareness of how to report concerns and the current financial climate.



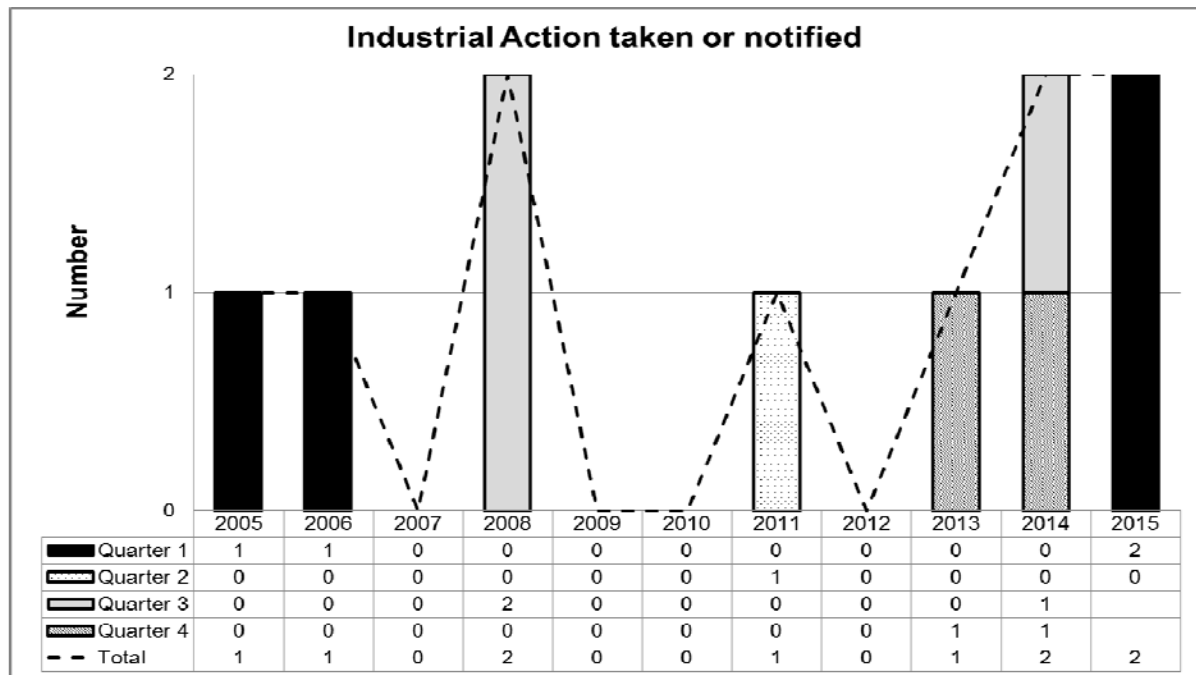


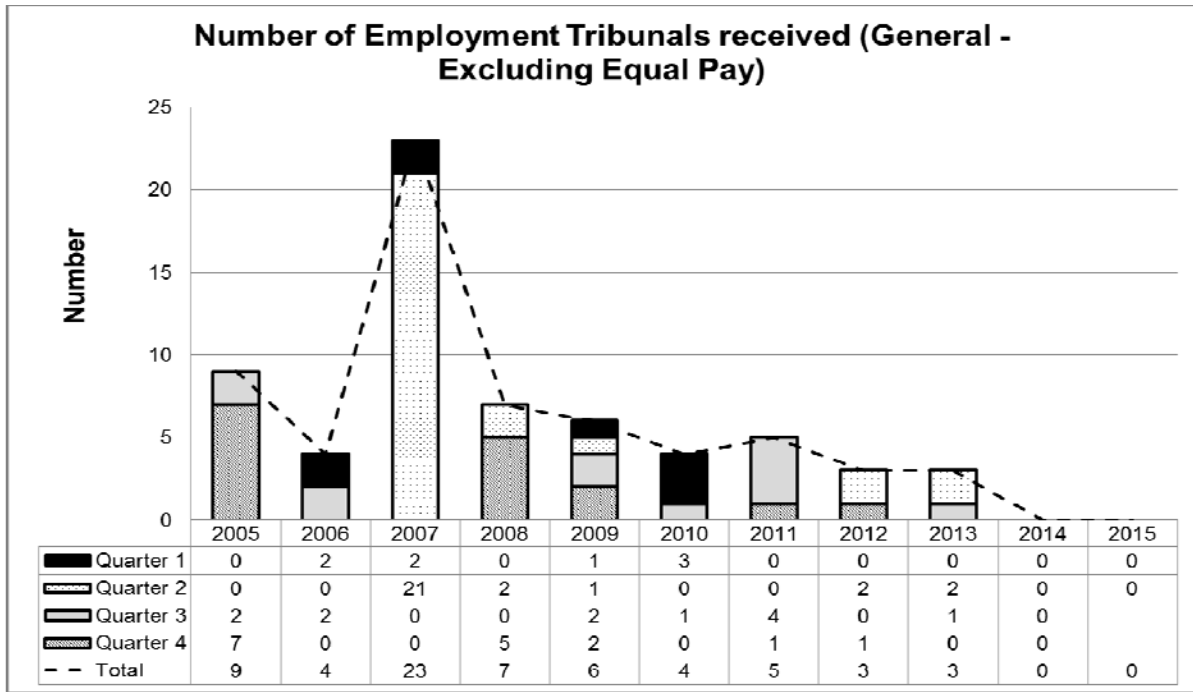


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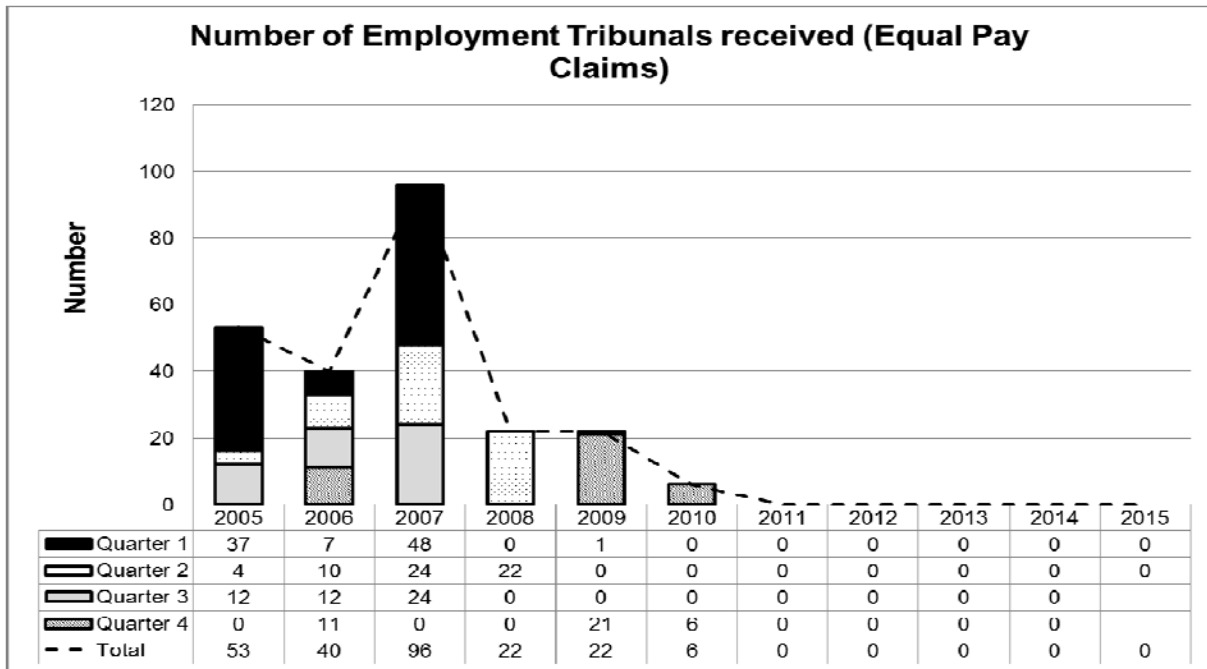
Changes in volumes may have some linkage to increasing awareness of how to report concerns and the current financial climate.

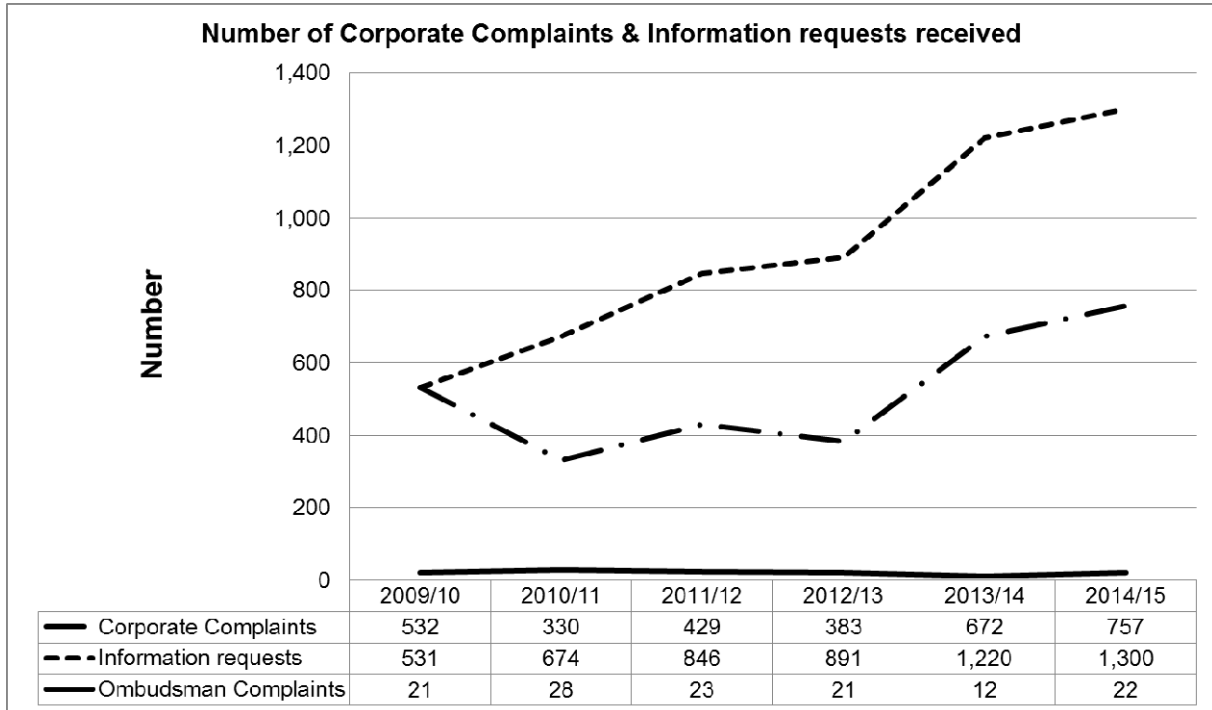




Comments

In 2007, 21 claims were received relating to group litigation against all 5 Tees Valley councils.





Comments

2010/11 - the reduction in the number of complaints received is, in part, attributed to the organisational learning resulting from complaints being handled effectively and in line with the procedure. This has resulted in a reduction in individuals having to contact the Council regarding the same issue(s).

2011/12 - the increase in the number of complaints received was anticipated in light of the increased pressure on Council services in the current financial climate.

2012/13 - while there was a decrease in the number of complaints received compared to the previous year the Council still received more complaints than it did in 2010/11.

2013/14 - this increase in complaints can be attributed primarily to problems people experienced with their refuse collection, following the introduction in wheeled bins.

2014/15 - this increase in complaints can be attributed primarily to problems people experienced with their refuse and recycling collections, following the introduction of alternate weekly collections.

Ombudsman Outcome Category



 Upheld: Maladministration and Injustice	3
 Not upheld: no further action	2
 Closed after initial enquiries: out of jurisdiction	7
 Closed after initial enquiries: no further action	10
- - Total	22