
Standards Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Monday, 28 July 2025 from 7.00 pm - 7.27 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney, Angela Harrison (Chair), James Hunt (Vice-Chair), Mark Last, Peter MacDonald (Substitute for Councillor Richard Palmer), Charlie Miller, Hannah Perkin and Ashley Wise.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Alona Diachenko and Robin Harris.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Patricia Richards (Independent Person).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Rich Lehmann, Pete Neal, Tom Nundy and Richard Palmer.

229 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

230 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 February 2025 (Minute Nos. 656 – 660) and the Meeting held on 14 May 2025 (Minute Nos. 36 – 37) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

231 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

232 **Update on Members Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised that since the publication of Appendix I additional DBS checks had been received from Labour, Conservative, The Swale Independents Alliance and Liberal Democrat groups.

The Chair emphasised that it was important for Members to have an up-to-date DBS certificate and if Members did not come forward, those individuals would be highlighted.

The Chair proposed that at the 23 September 2025 Standards Committee, a list of Members who had not provided proof of a DBS certificate to Democratic Services would be highlighted to the Committee. Councillor Mark Last seconded the proposal and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the update report on DBS Checks received from Councillors be noted.***
- (2) That at the 23 September 2025 Standards Committee, a list of Members who had not provided proof of a DBS certificate to Democratic Services would be highlighted to the Committee.***

233 Forward Decisions Plan***Resolved:***

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.

234 Complaints received over last 3 months - verbal update

The Monitoring Officer requested input regarding the Committee's preferred method for reviewing complaints received during the year. He suggested that within the Annual Monitoring Officer report, a complaints review could be included which summarised the complaints from the previous year.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, and these included:

- A verbal update at quarterly meetings was not helpful as it was important to track how many complaints the Council had received and to monitor any reoccurring themes;
- how many complaints did the Council receive in one year?;
- a simple table containing an overview of the number of complaints currently under review would suffice;
- needed a running total of complaints based on particular topic areas so the Standards Committee could advise any appropriate training that might be required; and
- a yearly report was too late for the Committee to consider, as there could be major issues which might need to be looked at by the Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer responded to the points raised and said it was difficult for officers to give a definitive number on complaints received in one year as the number of complaints received each year varied.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Annual report contained lessons learnt and details of specific cases from complaints that were received. From Members' comments, the Monitoring Officer suggested that a written report which showed the frequency of issues and the number of complaints shown by topic be presented to the Standards Committee quarterly, with an Annual report at the March Standards Committee to cover the complaints in more detail.

The Chair asked the Committee if they were happy with this approach and on being put to the vote, Members agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the update on complaints received be noted.

(2) That the Monitoring Officer prepared a written report which showed the frequency of issues and the number of complaints shown by topic, and this be presented quarterly to the Standards Committee.

(3) That the Monitoring Officer's Annual report contained a written report to summarise the complaints in more detail.

235 Code of Conduct arrangements - verbal update

The Monitoring Officer gave an update on the Code of Conduct arrangements document which was considered at the February 2025 Standards Committee. He had hoped that the arrangements document was included in the English Devolution Bill, but had since discovered that it was not included. The Monitoring Officer asked if Members wanted to progress with the arrangements document themselves, as it seemed like the government were not taking it forward at this stage.

A Member commented that the Code of Conduct arrangements was a document which helped provide clarity on how standards hearings should be conducted and thought it was important the work be carried forward. The Member asked whether the work carried out on the Code of Conduct arrangements could be circulated to the Standards Committee before it was reported back to the committee?

The Monitoring Officer agreed to provide an update to members of the committee and prepare a full report for the September 2025 Standards Committee meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That the verbal update be noted.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel