

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday, 18 November 2025 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 1.00 pm

Committee

Members Present:

Cllr J Boyle (Chairman)	Cllr H Blathwayt (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr N Dixon	Cllr N Housden
Cllr P Porter	Cllr L Shires

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Director for Legal & Governance & Monitoring Officer (MO)
Democratic Services & Governance Officer(s)

Also in attendance:

Independent Person (IP)

41 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

42 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None

43 MINUTES

Cllr Shires proposed and Cllr Porter seconded that the minutes of meeting of the Standards Committee held on the 19th December 2024 be approved as a correct record and it **WAS RESOLVED** unanimously to do so.

44 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

46 MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

The MO provided the Committee with an update on the excerpt from the Annual Monitoring Officer report on the Code of Conduct complaints.

Cllr Shires noted the report and expressed disappointment that so many of the complaints related to an allegation of disrespectful behaviour and asked the MO for an estimation of the cost of dealing with these complaints. The MO confirmed that whilst she didn't have exact figures, when matters went to full hearings the costs would run into several thousands of pounds.

47 DISPENSATIONS

The MO presented the report and updated the Committee on the dispensations that had been granted to Members.

48 UPDATE ON RECENT CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The MO explained that since the report was published 2 further complaints had been raised, one related to an allegation including bullying and one which had yet to be assessed.

49 UPDATE ON STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

The MO provided the Committee with information on the results of the government consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England. The outcome of the consultation mirrored, to a large extent, the views that NNDC had expressed, except regarding the rights of appeals.

The outcome of the consultation was that the government had signalled it intended to enact regulations to introduce a standard code of conduct to all authorities and identified that the role of the Independent Person was to continue. It was proposed that sanctions available would be more meaningful with potential suspensions of 3-6 months in certain circumstances together with disqualification after 2 suspensions within a 5-year period.

Cllr Dixon hoped that the regulations would provide a set of procedural rules and sanctions which were effective yet did not dissuade too many people from entering the democratic field. He welcomed ways to hold each other to account for their actions and behaviour, noting that many matters ought not to happen or should be resolved quickly.

The IP noted that of those matters where a hearing had been held at least half had been relating to the use of inappropriate language which hadn't been denied but had often been attempted to be justified by the subject matter of the complaint. He suggested that all those in public office needed to understand that the use of bad language was never justifiable and that training at Parish Council level might be appropriate.

Cllr Porter noted the difficulty in persuading individuals who act as democratic representatives to take on training in some cases. Cllr Shires questioned whether it should be a requirement for all those who became parish or other elected representatives.

Cllr Shires also noted the impact on time and financial resources of the plans regarding appeals – the financial impact would be felt by taxpayers, likely to be local council taxpayers.

Cllr Housden noted the general decline in cultural standards which he believed impacted on the level of respect shown to others. The IP noting that whilst there was generally more abuse within society those who are democratic representatives were expected not to react and adjust their behaviour to be appropriate.

The meeting ended at 1.33 pm.

Chairman