



Standards Committee
Annual Report 2025/26

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Foreword from the Chair of the Standards Committee

The work of the Standards Committee remains central to the ethical and governance responsibilities of the Council which are an essential element in local government continuing to retain the trust of the public which it serves.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Members on the Committee, the Independent Persons and officers of the Council, for their continued hard work and support in the work of the Committee during the year.

Mrs Ruth Jaffray

Co-opted Member

The Annual Report outlines the work of the Standards Committee during the municipal year 2025/26.

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1 Chair and Co-optees of Standards Committee 2025/26

The Articles of the Constitution require that a co-opted member be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee. The Council therefore approved the appointment of Mrs Ruth Jaffray in November 2016 who has undertaken that role since then.

2 Independent Persons

The Council has three Independent Persons who advise the Monitoring Officer on complaints against District or Parish Councillors and also advise Councillors who were the subject of complaints. These are Mr S Wainwright, Mr A Davies and Mr M Kenyon.

3 Complaints received during the period May 2025 to May 2026

From the start of May 2025, the Monitoring Officer has received 16 complaints. This is a reduction on last year when only 22 were received. 5 complaints related to the action of a district councillor and 10 relating to parish councillors.

Most incidents are relatively minor and where a potential breach was identified they were dealt with through informal methods such as an apology/training. Other more serious complaints are dealt with by an informal investigation and four complaints have been through the investigation process. One investigation found the councillor not to have breached the code whereas three have found breaches. Two of those complaints is still be resolved and discussions are taking place as to whether the councillor concerned accepts the findings. The third has resulted in an apology from the councillor concerned which the Monitoring Officer considered to be a proportionate way to conclude the complaint.

4 Response to the consultation on Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework.

In February 2026 we received a report outlining the government's proposals to improve the standards regime. Proposals include the power to suspend councillors for serious breached, withdrawal of allowances and a right of review for both complainants and subject members. Such changes to be introduced by the Government as soon as parliamentary time allows.

5 Consideration of requests for Dispensation.

No requests for Dispensation were received during the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

6 Constitution Review Work

One of the functions of the Standards Committee is to undertake a review of the Council's Constitution to ensure it is up to date and in line with legislation and current circumstances. The Committee considered a number of areas that had been identified for review including:

- Inclusion of a definition of the term "working day" in the Constitution.

7 Policy Review Work

Whistle-blowing Policy Review

The Council is committed to updating the Whistle-blowing policy on a regular basis to ensure it is fit for purpose. A review was conducted in January 2025 with no substantive changes being made other than housekeeping amendments. At Council on 8th October 2025 a motion to review the Whistleblowing Policy was submitted and members were reminded that it had already been reviewed and approved in January 2025. A further review of the Whistleblowing Policy took place at Standards Committee on 10th November 2026 with no further changes being made.

The Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the policy and would maintain a record of any concerns raised and the outcomes. The Monitoring Officer is also required to report as necessary to the Council on instances relating to Whistleblowing on an annual basis.

The Monitoring Officer reported to Standards Committee on 9th February 2026 and then to Council on 4th March 2026 that there had been two instances of Whistleblowing reported.

RIPA Policy Review

In early 2025, the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) undertook an inspection of the Council's arrangements for dealing with covert surveillance. The IPCO was satisfied that the Council was complying with its obligation as set out in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and suggested some suggestions on how certain parts of the Policy could be clarified. The RIPA Annual Report included the IPCO's findings and sought approval for amendments to the Policy. The Standards Committee on 9th February 2026 approved the amendments to the Policy.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that no such powers were used.

8 Gifts and Hospitality

- 8.1 The Council's Constitution specifies detailed arrangements for the registering of gifts and hospitality made to Members and officers.
- 8.2 The annual reporting of offers of gifts and hospitality made to Members and officers ensures that the Council's performance on this matter is monitored on a regular basis and that any changes in procedure can be introduced if necessary. The register of Gifts and Hospitality is also published on the Council's website.
- 8.3 In February 2026, the Standards Committee received and noted an annual report in respect of offers of gifts and hospitality made to Members and officers for the period January 2025 to December 2025.
- 8.4 Members are reminded that advice is available from the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Legal Services in relation to any offer of gift or hospitality and Members and officers are encouraged to seek this advice where they were unsure.

9 Member Training Attendance

Part of the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee is to oversee Members training including attendance at courses. A report relating to Member attendance on training course was considered at the Standards Committee on 11th May 2026.

Footnote: If any Member would like a copy of any of the reports referred to in this report, they should contact the Governance Team on 01246 242529