



MEETING : STANDARDS COMMITTEE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2026
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE

This meeting will be live streamed on the Council's Youtube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/EastHertsDistrict>

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor V Burt (Chair), N Clements, A Parsad-Wyatt, V Smith, T Stowe, R Townsend, Vacancy and Mr N Moss

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Councillor I Hunt – Much Hadham Parish Council

Councillor J Kenyon – Buckland Parish Council

Vacancy

Substitutes

Green Group: Councillors R Carter, N Cox and G Hill

Labour Group: Councillor C Redfern

Liberal Democrat Group: Councillors C Horner

(Note: Substitution arrangements must be notified by the absent Member to Democratic Services 7 hours before the meeting, i.e. by midday on the day of the meeting)

CONTACT OFFICER:

Erica Carter

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Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

A Member, present at a meeting of the Authority, or any committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Authority, with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in any matter to be considered or being considered at a meeting:

- must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;
- must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
- must disclose the interest to the meeting, whether registered or not, subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011;
- if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days;
- must leave the room while any discussion or voting takes place.

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Visit <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/35542/Political-Structure> for details.

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AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Chairman's Announcements

3. Declarations of Interest

4. Minutes - 21 January 2026 (Pages 5 - 8)

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2026.

5. Standards Update Report (Pages 9 - 13)

The report updates members of the Standards Committee on standards-related complaints logged with the Monitoring Officer since the previous report to Committee on 21st January 2026 and gives a brief overview of how the governance of high standards of conduct within the new unitary authority, to be brought in by Local Government Reorganisation, is being prepared for.

6. Urgent Business

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

7. Exclusion of the Press and Public

To move that under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of item xx on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 7C of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act (see subsequent pages for definitions of exempt information categories).

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 21
JANUARY 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

District Council Members:

Councillors V Burt, N Clements, A Parsad-
Wyatt, V Smith and T Stowe

Independent Persons:

Nicholas Moss

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor I Hunt

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Ellis	- Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Erica Carter	- Committee Support Officer

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

2 MINUTES - 16 JULY 2025

It was moved by Councillor Stowe and seconded by Councillor Smith that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. It was noted that Councillor Burt abstained

from the vote as she was not present at the meeting on 16 July 2025.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Standards meeting of the year and reminded participants to use their microphones when speaking so they could be heard on the webcast. The full webcast of the meeting can be viewed here: [Standards Committee - 21 January 2026](#)

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 STANDARDS UPDATE

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer presented his update. Since the previous Standards Committee meeting in July 2025, five complaints had been received. Four of these had been resolved and the remaining case was nearing completion. It had previously been requested that the source of each complaint be shown, so the report now indicated whether complaints were submitted by councillors or by members of the public.

The Monitoring Officer outlined recent government developments relating to the national review of the standards regime. MHCLG had published recommendations proposing a nationally prescribed mandatory code of conduct, a requirement for every council to operate a formal standalone standards committee and a stronger emphasis on transparency and the publication of outcomes. In addition, it had been

suggested that investigations should continue even if a councillor resigned, so complainants could still receive closure.

A major change concerned sanctions. At present, councils could do little more than issue a censure or remove a member from committees. The proposed reforms introduce the possibility of suspension, interim suspension and disqualification for repeat or serious misconduct. This would significantly strengthen the system but may also lengthen the process, as new stages (review and a national appeals body) could be added.

The Monitoring Officer noted the likely impacts, included an increase in the number of complaints, longer investigations and more meaningful sanctions. Members noted that implementation was expected from summer to late 2026.

Members discussed fairness for both complainants and councillors, the risk of malicious complaints, the need for consistency across councils and the potential workload implications, especially with local government reorganisation approaching.

It was moved by Councillor Clements and seconded by Councillor Parsad-Wyatt that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - the Committee received the report and provided any observations to the Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer.

6 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7:32pm

Chairman

Date

East Herts Council Report

Standards Committee

Date of meeting: 1st July 2026

Report by: Jonathan Geall – Director for Communities and Monitoring Officer

Report title: Standards Update Report

Ward(s) affected: All wards

Summary

- The report updates members of the Standards Committee on standards-related complaints logged with the Monitoring Officer since the previous report to Committee on 21st January 2026 and gives a brief overview of how the governance of high standards of conduct within the new unitary authority, to be brought in by Local Government Reorganisation, is being prepared for.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE: THAT:

- A. The Committee considers the complaints cases received over the last six months (paragraph 2.3) and provides any observations to the Director for Communities and Monitoring Officer; and**
- B. The Committee considers the preparations for maintaining standards in the new unitary authority to be brought in by Local Government Reorganisation (paragraphs 2.4 to 2.8) and the national picture regarding standards framework reform (paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10) and provides any observations to the Director for Communities and Monitoring Officer.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Members provide oversight on standards-related matters.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Within its terms of reference, the Standards Committee has a function ‘to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council’ and ‘to receive reports from the Monitoring Officer and assess the operation and effectiveness of the Members’ Code of Conduct’.
- 2.2 Paragraph 7.5.1 of the Constitution also states that ‘The Monitoring Officer will present a general report on standards matters at each Committee meeting, updating the Committee on the workload of the Monitoring Officer and current standards issues’.

East Herts complaints/ issues update

- 2.3 There have been two complaints logged with the Monitoring Officer since the last report to the Standards Committee on 21st January 2026. These are as follows:

Complaint about: Parish/Town or District Councillor	Summary of complaint	Action taken
Complaint 01 (2026/27) Complaint against two parish councillors (of the same parish council)	Complaint of parish councillors’ behaviour referred to the Monitoring Officer by the parish clerk	Referred back to attempt local resolution as required under the council’s Complaints Handling Procedure
Complaint 02 (2026/27) Complaint against a district councillor made by a member of the public	Complaint about actions attributed to the district councillor in a local press article	Determined that the councillor was not acting in the capacity of a member of East Herts Council and so the Code of Conduct was not engaged

Local Government Reorganisation

- 2.4 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as planned will see the abolition of East Herts Council, with its functions moving to a new

unitary authority operating over a larger geographical footprint. The legislative instrument that lays out the basis and process for this will be a Structural Changes Order (SCO).

- 2.5 The SCO will require that a shadow authority (of the unitary authority to cover this area) comes into being in May 2027 following elections and must, at its first meeting, adopt the necessary instruments to ensure good governance. Of particular relevance for this committee, the shadow authority must adopt a code of conduct, as required under section 27 of the Local Act 2011, at its first meeting.
- 2.6 To enable the existing local authorities to jointly work on the governance arrangements in readiness for the shadow authority coming into being, the SCO will require a joint committee of elected members from the existing councils to oversee implementation arrangements and prepare documents to hand over to the shadow authority for adoption.
- 2.7 The SCO will be subject to an 'affirmative' parliamentary process, that is, it must be approved by both Houses of Parliament. Thus, it is unlikely to come into effect until early 2027. Waiting for enactment of the SCO will give limited time for the joint committee to be formed and complete its business prior to dissolving after the May 2027 elections (to enable the shadow authority to prepare for the unitary authority). Therefore, across Hertfordshire, the option of voluntarily setting up joint committees in the autumn is being considered. East Herts Council is supportive of this, and the council's Monitoring Officer is engaged in work to establish the joint committee for this area.
- 2.8 At the next scheduled Standards Committee meeting in January 2027, members of the committee will be given an update on LGR preparations as they relate to standards matters.

Strengthening the standards and conduct framework

- 2.9 At its January 2026 meeting, the Standards Committee received an update on the government's proposal for 'Strengthening the standards and conduct framework'.
- 2.10 At the last committee meeting, members noted that with the consultation closing last November, there was an expectation of

implementation in summer to late 2026. To date, there have been no updates issued by the government. Officers will keep members informed of developments at the national level.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 To ensure oversight of the maintenance of standards and good governance.

4.0 Options

4.1 Not providing updates to members on standards issues. This option is NOT RECOMMENDED, as to do so would weaken the Committee's ability to adequately promote and maintain the Ethical Standards Framework and to maintain an oversight of the council's arrangements for dealing with complaints.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Appropriate reporting processes and policy frameworks help to ensure good governance of the council and therefore reduce risk of poor practice or unsafe decision making.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 As noted below.

Community Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Data Protection

All information pertaining to the complainants, councillors complained of and the parish / town council involved have been removed to maintain confidentiality.

Equalities

None arising directly from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

None arising directly from this report.

Financial

None arising directly from this report. It is worth noting that complaints are dealt with by the Monitoring Officer with some referrals externally should the Complaints Handling Procedure indicate that this is appropriate or because of resource implication within the Directorate in dealing with this in-house. Resources are available to cover this.

Health and Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Human Resources

None arising directly from this report.

Human Rights

None arising directly from this report.

Legal

Yes – The Standards Committee has a function under paragraph 7.4.1(a) and (f) of the council’s Constitution ‘to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council’ and ‘to receive reports from the Monitoring Officer and assess the operation and effectiveness of the Members’ Code of Conduct’ respectively. This report assists in fulfilling these functions.

Specific Wards

No.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 None.

Contact Officer

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