

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 16 JULY
2025, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

District Council Members:

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

Independent Person:

Nicholas Moss

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors J Kenyon and I Hunt

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Ellis

- Director for Legal,
Policy and
Governance and
Monitoring Officer
- Committee
Support Officer

Roz Hamilton

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APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR 2025/26

It was moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Parsad-Wyatt, that Councillor Clements be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for 2025/26. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Clements be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Standards

Committee for 2025/26.

110 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Burt and Councillor Furness. It was noted that Councillor Carter was substituting for Councillor Burt.

Councillor Smith asked that it be noted that she had apologised for missing the meeting on 28 January 2025 due to a technical error with a new mobile telephone.

111 MINUTES - 28TH JANUARY 2025

Councillor Stowe proposed, and Councillor Parsad-Wyatt seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 28 January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 28^t January 2025, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

112 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chair's announcements

113 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

114 STANDARDS UPDATE

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report that updated Members of the Committee on the standards complaints that had been received during the last six months.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer opened by congratulating Councillor Clements on his appointment as Vice-Chair.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer reiterated the purpose of the Standards Committee. He said that Members who were familiar with the report would be aware that there was usually around 6 - 7 issues included. He said that over the last 6 months there had been no reported issues, as everyone had been impeccably behaved.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer said that the one issue reported in 2025 had been investigated, and that the independent advisor had identified no breach.

Councillor Parsad-Wyatt agreed with the Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer, and congratulated all East Herts Councillors for being on their best behaviour. He said that following on from the meeting held in July 2024, he thought that it had been agreed moving forward that any complaints from a resident, Parish Council or District Council would be shared, in order to give the Committee the context on the type of behaviours involved, as long as the information disclosed did not identify the individual.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer apologised for not including this information, he said that he did not recall this specific action, but he did however recall that withdrawn complaints would be added to the report moving forward.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer Members gave a verbal report on the one complaint which was from a resident towards a District Councillor.

Councillor Clements asked if the large turnover of councillors in the last couple of years had resulted in a difference in behaviours from councillors, thus resulting in fewer complaints. The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer stated that in his five

and a half years tenure, he had not known of a lower level of complaints, and that hoped that the cycle of good conduct would continue.

Councillor Carter asked for an update on how the legislation in Standards Committees would operate under the proposed unity authority working and asked if the process would change.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer said that if the unity authority was set up tomorrow the legislation would be the same. He said that the current government were looking at changing the standards regime, particularly around repercussions of complaints that were upheld against councillors. He said that the current strongest sanction was censure, no matter how egregious the breach was. He said that central government were looking at introducing additional, and more vigorous sanctions, such as suspensions and exclusions from committees.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer referred Members to the independent person who stated that he was actively involved in the works currently being undertaken by central government. He said that in 2011 the Localism Act changed, permitting councils to follow the code which they wanted. He said that there was however an imminent proposal to go back to one single mandatory code of conduct.

The independent person said that regarding sanctions, central government was looking at suspensions under certain circumstances, and the more contentious possibility of disqualifications. He said that there was a thin line in this process ensuring that the public had some sort of demonstrable redress, and balancing that against the need not to interfere with the democratic mandate.

The independent person said that there were complexities in and around the entire process that required careful consideration, but these were not insurmountable. He

said that other areas that could be tightened up in supporting standards of conduct were the declaration of office, managing the expectation of high standards for the role of a councillors.

Councillor Carter asked when there would be a decision on the implementation of the new standards. The independent person said a response was imminent, the caveat being dependant on other competing interests which could elongate the process.

Members then discussed if they were considered a councillor 24/7. They debated the impact of things which members said, and how these were perceived, and the fine line that needed to be understood regarding this.

The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer reiterated to the committee that before they could breach the code of conduct, members had to be acting in their capacity as a councillor. He summarised by saying that a councillor was not a councillor 24 hours a day.

Councillor Stowe observed the lack of complaints and said that the pushing back complaints to the parish and town councils had potentially made this difference. The Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer agreed that the new element of the complaints procedure, being local resolution, had been positive.

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

RESOLVED – that the committee received the report and provided any observations to the Director of Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer.

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There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.23 pm

Chairman

Date