

AGENDA FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE



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To: All Members of Standards Committee

Councillors : N Bayley (Chair), A Booth, R Gold, M Hayes, J Hook, K Hussain, D Quinn, T Rafiq, M Rahimov and D Vernon

Dear Member/Colleague

Standards Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Standards Committee which will be held as follows:-

Date:	Tuesday, 1 July 2025
Place:	Meeting Rooms A & B - Bury Town Hall
Time:	6.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.

AGENDA

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & ANY MATTERS ARISING *(Pages 3 - 6)*

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 3rd April 2025.

4 STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE *(Pages 7 - 10)*

5 STANDARDS COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026
(Pages 11 - 12)

6 CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE *(Pages 13 - 32)*

7 REMOTE MEETING ATTENDANCE & PROXY VOTING UPDATE *(Pages 33 - 36)*

8 URGENT BUSINESS

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.00pm, Thursday 18th September 2025

Minutes of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	3 rd April 2025
Present:	Councillor K Hussain (in the Chair) Councillors A Booth, R Gold, D Green, M Hayes, J Hook, D Quinn and D Vernon
Also in attendance:	Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services. Michael Cunliffe, Democratic Services. Independent Persons: Craig Ainsworth and Stuart Birtwell
Public Attendance:	No members of the public were present at the meeting.

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor T Rafiq and J Gallagher, Head of Governance.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & ANY MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the last meeting held on the 27th November 2024 were approved as a correct record.

4 MEMBER ATTENDANCE STATISTICS

The Standards Committee received a report which gave details of all Councillor attendance at Committee meetings from the beginning of the Municipal Year up to the 1st April 2025.

The summary included public facing meetings as listed on the data information and attendance summaries for other meetings (including private meetings) which are provided to political groups informally on a monthly basis.

Craig Ainsworth commented was there a threshold expectation of attendance and wondered what attendance figures were for training and how this was addressed in political groups. If a figure was set for 75% of expected attendance, then the report for this Committee could reflect that.

Jacqui Dennis stated there was no set attendance percentage but referred to the six-month rule for non-attendance. The data was presented at the meeting for transparency.

Members commented that group whips monitor the data and being a representative for local residents it was good practice to demonstrate the responsibility for fulfilling the role.

It was suggested if training data should come to this meeting and Jacqui Dennis reported she could link this work via Member Development.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted and the attendance update was placed on the agenda around every six months.

5 CONSTITUTION UPDATE- PROBITY IN PLANNING CODE OF CONDUCT

Jacqui Dennis explained that at the Annual Council meeting on the 22nd May 2024, the Council received a report explaining that the Constitution should be reviewed annually and agreed the various sections for review over the forthcoming municipal year 2024-2025.

The Constitution sets out how the Council operates; how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Council has a legal duty to publish an up-to-date Constitution and review regularly.

Over the course of 2024-2025, Probity in Planning Guidance was proposed for review along with other areas.

The Probity in Planning Guidance regulates the performance of the Council's planning function, principally as it applies to applications for planning permission, but also to the other areas within the terms of reference of the Planning Control Committee pertaining to development control (e.g. enforcement, listed buildings, conservation areas, tree preservation orders, etc).

A draft updated version of the Probity in Planning Guidance had been circulated to Members of the Planning Committee for any comments which could include possible deletions or additions. The governance process resulted in the updated version of Guidance submitted to this Committee.

A discussion took place on some of the reasons for amendments being undertaken. Members of the Committee would send any suggested comments to the Clerk before formal approval at Council in May.

It was agreed:-

That the report be noted.

6 CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Jacqui Dennis reported as part of the annual review of the constitution a forward plan item for this Committee had been an ethical governance review, the report attached to the agenda pack sought Members agreement to develop a revised Code of Corporate Governance which would be considered and approved by this committee.

Details of the work involved were detailed in the report attached to the agenda pack.

The Code was underpinned by the seven key principles set out in the current revised framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

The Monitoring Officer would bring an updated report to a future meeting of the Standards Committee.

It was agreed:-

That the report be noted and that a Code of Corporate Governance would be prepared for review by Standards Committee.

7 URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business was reported.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Standards Committee meeting was provisionally scheduled to take place at 6.00pm on Tuesday the 1st July at Bury Town Hall.

COUNCILLOR K HUSSAIN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.10pm)

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Standards Committee (including Standards Sub Committee) Terms of Reference

The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives. The Standards Committee will appoint up to three independent persons.

Standards Hearings Panel - Sub Committee

The Standards Committee will set up a sub-committee called the Standards Hearings Panel. The Independent Person is invited to attend all meetings of the Hearing Panel. The Panel will consider complaints under the code of conduct that cannot be resolved informally.

Functions:

Code of conduct

- (a) To recommend to Council the adoption of a code (the Code of Conduct) dealing with the conduct that is expected of members and co-opted members of the Council and its arrangements for dealing with complaints (the Complaints Procedure) that members and co-opted members have failed to comply with the code.
- (b) To keep the Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedure under review and recommend changes/replacement to Council as appropriate
- (c) To publicise the adoption, revision or replacement of the Council's Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedure
- (d) To oversee the process for the recruitment of the Independent Persons and make recommendations to Council for their appointment
- (e) To annually review overall figures and trends from Code of Conduct complaints.
- (f) To grant dispensations under Section 33 (2) (b) (d) and (c) Localism Act 2011 or any subsequent amendment
- (g) To hear appeals in relation to dispensations granted under section 33 2) (a) and (c) Localism Act 2011 by the Monitoring Officer
- (h) Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors, co-opted members, on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (i) To determine how to deal with complaints made against Councillors where it is alleged that they have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.
- (j) To determine investigation reports compiled on behalf of the Monitoring Officer, including the power to establish hearing panels, where necessary.
- (k) To deal with any reports from the Monitoring Officer on any matter which is referred to it for determination;

- (l) To deal with reports of the Monitoring Officer regarding breaches of the protocols/guidance to Members accompanying the Council's Code of Conduct for Members which do not in themselves constitute a breach of that Code;
- (m) To report from time to time to Council on ethical governance within the Council.
- (o) To maintain an overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman Investigations
- (p) To consider and determine applications for exemptions from political restriction
- (q) To maintain an overview of the council's Constitution.

Standards Hearing Panel

The Standards Hearings Panel is a sub-committee of the Standards Committee, which will undertake the functions set out below, where the matter cannot be resolved by the Monitoring Officer.

The following functions have been delegated to it:

To take decisions in respect of a Council Member who is found on a hearing held in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure to have failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct for Members ("the Subject Member"), such actions to include:

- (i) Publication of the findings of the Standards Hearings Panel in respect of the Subject Member's conduct;
- (ii) Reporting the findings of the Standards Hearings to Council for information;
- (iii) Recommendation to Council that the Subject Member should be censured;
- (iv) Recommendation to the Subject Member's Group Leader (or in the case of ungrouped Members to Council) that the Subject Member should be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council for a recommended period;
- (v) Recommendation to the Leader that the Subject Member should be removed from the Executive, or removed from their Portfolio responsibilities;²
- (vi) Instructing the Monitoring Officer to arrange training for the Subject Member;
- (vii) Recommendation to Council that the Subject Member should be removed from all appointments to which the Subject Member has been appointed or nominated by the Council;
- (viii) Withdrawal of facilities provided to the Subject Member by the Council, such as a computer, website and/or e-mail and internet access; or
- (ix) Placing such restrictions on the Subject Member's access to Council staff, buildings or parts of buildings as may be reasonable in the circumstances

Membership:

The Mayor will chair the Committee. In the absence of the Chair, the Committee will elect a Chair for the duration of the meeting.

The Leader of the Council cannot be a Member of the Standards Committee

One Member may be appointed from the Cabinet but they cannot Chair the Committee.

The Committee will appoint up to three Independent Person(s), for a period of two years and will receive remuneration in line with the Member Allowance Scheme – Co-optees' Allowance.

5. MEETINGS

The Standards Committee will meet 4 times a year.

The **date and timings** of the meetings will be fixed in advance by the Council, as part of the agreed schedule of meetings.

Additional meetings may be convened at the request of the Chair, and with the agreement of the Council Leader.

A **quorum** of three will apply for meetings of the Standards Committee.

Declarations of Interest – Any personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interests held by members should be declared in accordance with the Councils Code of Conduct on any item of business at a meeting, either before it is discussed or as soon as it becomes apparent. Interests which appear in the Council Register of Interests should still be declared at meetings, where appropriate.

Decisions are to be taken by **consensus**. Where it is not possible to reach consensus, a decision will be reached by a simple majority of those present at the meeting. Where there are equal votes the Chair of the meeting will have the casting vote, there will be no restriction on how the Chair chooses to exercise his/her casting vote.

The Councils Monitoring Officer will act as the **lead officer**. Lead officer responsibilities will include ensuring that agendas are appropriate to the work programme of the Standards Committee.

Workload – Work Programme to be determined annually by the Standards Committee.

The agenda and supporting **papers** shall be in a standard format and circulated at least five clear working days in advance of meetings. The minutes of decisions taken at the meeting will be kept and circulated to partner organisations as soon as possible. Minutes will be published on the Council web site.

Access to Information – It is important to ensure that all councillors are kept aware of the work of the Standards Committee and a copy of the minutes will be uploaded on to the Councils website as soon as practicable following the meeting. The Standards Committee shall be regarded as a Council Committee for Access to

Information Act purposes. Freedom of Information Act provisions shall apply to all business.

All meetings will be held in **public**.

The Standards Committee will retain the ability to **exclude representatives** of the press and other members of the public from a defined section of the meeting having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, publicly on which would be prejudicial to the public interest (Part 5A and Schedule 12A, Local Government Act, as amended).

Meetings will be **clerked** by a representative of Democratic Services.

Standards Committee**Work Programme 2025-2026****Tuesday 1st July 2025**

- Draft Work programme 2025-2026
- Continuation of the Corporate Governance Review- Code of corporate governance (Part of the constitutional review plan 2025-26)
- Remote Meeting Attendance & Proxy Voting Update

18th September 2025

- LGO Annual Review
- Public Participation Guidance (Part of the constitutional review plan 2025-26)
- Code Conduct- Annual Review

26th November 2025

- 6-month Member attendance statistics (Data from May AGM to end October)
- Member Complaints Update
- Officer Code of Conduct (Part of the constitutional review plan 2025-26)

12th February 2026

- TBC

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Classification	Item No.
Open / Closed	

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Meeting date:	1 st July 2025
Title of report:	Code of Corporate Governance
Report by:	Jacqui Dennis, Director Law & Governance
Decision Type:	For comment
Ward(s) to which report relates	N/A

Executive Summary:

At the April 2025 meeting, Standards Committee requested that a Code of Corporate Governance was drafted and returned to this committee early in the next municipal year for comments.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to review the draft guide and provide their comments.

Background

As part of the annual review of the constitution a forward plan item for this Committee has been an ethical governance review, this report seeks Members comments on a draft Code of Corporate Governance. This matter was considered in April and Members requested that a draft code was brought to this Committee for comment early in the new Municipal year. It is proposed that the views of this Committee and the Executive Leadership Team are obtained prior to a final draft returning to this Committee for it's approval. This report seeks Members comments on the draft Code of Corporate Governance (at Appendix A).

Corporate Governance is the term used to describe how the council manages its affairs and its relationship with the community, colleagues, customers, and partners. The code promotes the values of the Authority upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour, ethical standards and legal compliance.

The purpose of the Code of Corporate Governance is to set out the arrangements by which the Council will ensure effective governance. The Council is committed to ensuring the highest standards of governance, this code of governance is underpinned by the seven key principles set out in the current revised framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Guidance notes for English Authorities (2016 Edition)', published by Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA), and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers (SOLACE).

The guidance states that "the overall aim is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making and that there is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities."

The Code is a document which will be reviewed annually and reflect any governance changes made during that time period.

Report Author and Contact Details:

Jacqui Dennis – Director of Law & Governance
J.dennis@bury.gov.uk

Background papers:

Appendix 1 – Draft code of Corporate Governance

Code of Corporate Governance

April 2025

Code of Corporate Governance

Bury Council is committed to ensuring the highest standards of governance, this code of governance is underpinned by the seven key principles set out in the current revised framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Guidance notes for English Authorities (2016 Edition)', published by Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA), and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers (SOLACE). The guidance states that "the overall aim is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making and that there is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities."

Corporate Governance is the term used to describe how the council manages its affairs and its relationship with the community, colleagues, customers, and partners. Engaging with our residents and stakeholders. It focuses on outcomes for the community and implements our vision. It sets out how we take decisions ensuring that we do so in a transparent and accountable way that are subject to effective scrutiny. We monitor our performance and manage risk. Councillors and officers working together effectively to achieve outcomes to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles. Developing the capacity and capabilities to provide effective leadership.

The code promotes the values of the Authority upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour, ethical standards and legal compliance.

A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

We ensure that members and officers behave with integrity –

- The council has a Code of Conduct for employees. [Final Section 2 - EE Code of Conduct.pdf](#)
- The council has a Code of Conduct for Members alongside supporting guidance for Members [SECTION 1- The Code of Conduct.pdf](#)
- [4. Supporting guidance on Code of Conduct.pdf](#)
- The Council has an Officer Member protocol [PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS.pdf](#)
- Members' training programme – this is updated annually and reviewed by the Member Development Group consisting of Members and Officers.
- There is a system for Member and Officer declarations of interest
- We ensure that staff know how to access our whistleblowing procedure [Bury Council Whistle Blowing Policy - July 2023](#)

We have anti-fraud and corruption procedures. All our staff are expected to help prevent fraud and corruption, and are encouraged, supported, and protected to speak up if they encounter potential wrongdoing.

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s40038/BuryAntiFraudCorruptionStrategyJuly2023.pdf>

We seek to establish, monitor, and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance by:

- Investigation of complaints about elected members in consultation with the Independent Persons whom the Council is required to appoint under the Localism Act 2011. We have a standards Committee and separate Codes of Conduct for members and officers.
- Maintaining registers of gifts & hospitality and member & officer interests, with reminders being issued on a regular basis
- Ensuring that appropriate protocols are in place for Member/Officer relations alongside effective procedures for the declaration of interests, gifts and hospitality for both members and officers.

- Operate ethical procurement policies to ensure that commitment to our values and integrity is delivered by external suppliers delivering services on our behalf.

Respecting the Rule of Law – Demonstrated by the appointment of a Monitoring Officer and statutory officers these include:

- The Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer (Director of Law and Governance), s151 Officer (Director of Finance).
- The council operates the following Assurance Boards:-
 - Governance and Assurance Board
 - Policy Digital and Transformation Board
 - Finance Board
 - Commercial Board
 - Regeneration & Sustainability Board
 - The Boards report on a monthly basis to the Executive Leadership Team.
- Members Assurance Board lead by the Leader receives highlight reports from the assurance boards and receives assurance reports from areas of focus across all areas of the Council.
- The Council has a Director of Law & Governance (Council Solicitor) who acts as the Council's Monitoring Officer overseeing arrangements for allegations of breach of the Members' code of conduct.
- Our Internal Audit function carry out audits and evaluate the internal control framework.
- We have a Senior Information Risk Owner and Data Protection Officer in line with the legislative requirements. We regularly report our performance in relation to compliance with GDPR to our Audit committee.

- The Council has a policy and compliance team who have oversight of all complaints across the Council. Complaints dealt with in accordance with our complaints policy. [Complaints procedure - Bury Council](#)
- We review the learning from complaints.
- We record and track all complaints made to the Ombudsman.
- All complaints data is reported to the Governance and Assurance Board for oversight.

B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- We ensure that the Council website and buildings are accessible to the public. We publish details of our Committees, dates of meetings, publication of reports in advance of meetings. [Browse Meetings, 2000 - Bury Council](#)
- We publish a forward plan of decisions to be taken by the Council [Browse forward plans - Bury Council](#)
- We operate the following scrutiny committees
 - Overview and scrutiny
 - Children and Young Persons Scrutiny
 - Health Scrutiny
- The public participation guidance sets out how the public can engage with our meetings, and participate in matters with the Council – [Final Public Participation Guidance.pdf](#)
- We live stream our Cabinet and Council meetings [Bury Council - Council Stream](#)
- The Council ensures compliance with the requirements of the Transparency code.

- The Council web site is accessible, providing details of Council meetings, its policies procedures and the Council constitution.
- All budget papers are accessible online including our Medium term financial strategy .
- We publish an Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Auditors report to inform stakeholders and service users of the previous years outcomes.
- Our Standards and Audit Committees both contain Independent Members.
- We have a publication scheme - [Freedom of Information publication scheme - Bury Council](#)
- We publish our forward plan. [Forward plan - Notice of Key Decisions - published January 2025 - Bury Council](#)
- Our forward plan sets out the details of the key decisions which the Executive Cabinet, individual Executive Members or Officers expect to take during the next four month period. The Plan is rolled forward every month and is available to the public 14 days before the beginning of each month.
- A key decision is a decision taken at a Cabinet meeting, by an individual Cabinet Member, or a Joint Committee of the Cabinet and is:

Any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A decision will be considered financially significant if it results in incurring expenditure or making savings of £500,000 or greater; unless the specific expenditure or savings have previously been agreed by full Council.

Any other executive decision which in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer is likely to be significant having regard to:

- (a) the number of residents/service users that will be affected in the Wards concerned;

- (b) whether the impact is short term, long term or permanent.
- (c) the impact on the community in terms of the economic, social and environmental well-being.

Maintain and develop relationships with Organisations across the public and voluntary sector

- We will consult at an appropriate time with our stakeholders, we will seek the views of Residents when we bring forward specific proposals requiring consultation. We will review and evaluate all responses we receive.
- Bury VCFA is a local infrastructure organisation providing Volunteering and Development support to the VCSE sector in Bury, enhancing their ability to support local communities. Bury VCFA also promotes the VCSE sector and advocates on their behalf at a strategic level with other stakeholder.
- Ensuring effective relationships with our joint venture partners and company arrangements with oversight of the Commercial Board.
- The Council has established a joint venture partnership with two large, national developers to deliver regeneration at scale in both Prestwich and Bury Town Centres.

C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

- We will engage and consult with residents, partners and other key stakeholders when designing key strategies.
- The Let's Do It Strategy sets out a clear ambition for Bury 2030: to stand out as a place that is achieving faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation. Bury Council play a central role in driving the delivery of this ambition. LET'S Do It! was codesigned with a wide range of stakeholders and partners, including the Bury business community who have a critical role to play here in supporting the delivery of this ambition as partners across our borough.
- [Let's Do It! strategy - Bury Council](#)

- Ensure that outcomes are focused on achieving delivery of the overall vision for the and to be transparent about financial limitations.
- Develop a Medium-Term Financial Strategy which sets out financial assumptions and provides a set of goals for financial decision making for the planning period ahead.
- Delivery of our social value strategy, climate change policies and providing leadership on our equality, diversity and inclusion priorities.
- Our Social Value Strategy will be driven by a Steering Group bringing together representatives from all Council Departments, the Bury VCFA and business community. The steering Group is responsible for assuring delivery and recommend an annual set of TOM that align to our Corporate strategy.
- Cabinet will also receive an annual report on social value activity and achievements (economic, social, and environmental benefits) in all of its commissioning/ procurement, and this is mandated within Contractual Standing Orders.
- Ensure our strategic partners share our important Corporate Parenting mission by working closely with large Private Sector organisations with which we have Strategic Partnerships and Joint Ventures to ensure our Looked After Children and Care Experienced young people receive direct benefits from large scale activities occurring within the Borough.
- Ensure that services are clear about their role in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty (S149 of the Equality Act 2010). When required, Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out to assess the impact of proposals which may have a differential effect on individuals with protected characteristics and communities across the Borough, these reports will be appended to our Cabinet reports.
- Commit to progressing EDI for our workforce, informed by our Employee Groups and the Trade Union

D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes –

- Ensure our corporate planning is clearly focused on delivery
- Ensure consistent and effective service planning, with each service completing an individual plan. Services will ensure that their priorities and activities set out in their service plan all contribute towards delivery of our Corporate Plan, and that there is also a focus on continuous improvement.
- Collectively tackle alongside our partners our plans in the Let's Do it strategy
- Plan our activity at a strategic level through our budget and business planning cycle, in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. We work with our external stakeholders through Bury Together to ensure services delivered across different parts of the organisations and partners complement each other and avoid duplication.

E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

To develop the Capability of the Organisation's Leadership and Other Individuals we -

- Provide an induction programme for all newly elected members.
- We provide a members development programme for all Members which is reviewed and updated annually, the programme provides a training programme for the municipal year and specific programmes for Members to develop their Leadership skills. Mandatory Training is provided to Members sitting on Audit, Planning and Licensing Committee. Members are asked to complete core training modules each year including corporate parenting training but also have access to a range of online training.
- All staff Members have an annual personal development review.

- Staff are required to complete a suite of mandatory training modules , compliance is reviewed regularly, Managers are provided with a dashboard providing this information.
- A full induction is provided to all new starter and all staff moving roles.
- There is a programme of briefings to all staff, the Chief Executive has a regular VLOG
- All staff members have access to our Employee Assistance programme.

F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management, to do this we -

- Operate an effective risk management framework, ensuring that a system of risk recording is across all areas of the Council to inform the corporate risk register.
- Clear performance metrics against the corporate plan are reported to Members on a quarterly basis, under pinned by a system of Boards and Members Assurance Group.
- Effective Overview and Scrutiny committees.
- Internal controls to assist in the management of risks. Response to internal and external audit reports including responding to any recommendations from our Auditors.
- Internal control processes, which support the achievement of our objectives while managing risks. The current approach will be set out annually in Risk and Internal Audit reports to Audit Committee and supported by our governance Boards.
- Maintain and communicate clear policies and arrangements in respect of counter fraud and anti-corruption.

- Maintain an Audit Committee which oversees the effectiveness of governance and risk management arrangements, internal systems of control, and antifraud and anti-corruption arrangements.
- Annually report to Audit Committee our internal auditor's findings into the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.
- Ensure robust and integrated risk management arrangements are in place, we have risk registers supported by a risk tool kit. Our corporate risk register is reviewed by our Audit Committee
- Maintain financial regulations to ensure consistency and clear financial protocols
- Maintain a transparent complaints and feedback procedure.
- Internal Audit annual risk-based programme of internal audits informed by the council's risk register.
- Ensure effective information governance arrangements are in place to support compliance with existing and emerging legislation for data protection and privacy.
- Production of our Annual Governance Statement
- Regular Finance and performance reporting – quarterly budget monitoring to Members.

Managing Data - Comply with data protection legislation, which includes the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). This will ensure that data processing is carried out fairly, lawfully, and transparently

- The Monitoring Officer is the council's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and a Head of Governance is the Council's Data Protection Officer.
- A suite of policies are in place [03 Data Protection Policy September 2024.pdf](#)
- Two Caldicott Guardians are in place for Children and Adults they provide leadership and guidance on complex matters.
- A system is in place for the reporting of data breaches.
- The DPO provides advice on Privacy Impact Assessments and Data Processing agreements.
- The Council maintain a Record of Processing.
- The Council operate a system of Information Governance champions.
- The DPO works with other DPO/Leads across GM and alongside the GMCA team ensuring that good practice is maintained.

Strong Public Financial Management

- Financial management led by the Finance Board which is chaired by the s151 Officer.
- Compliance with the Financial Management Code (FM Code) which sets out the standards of financial management expected for local authorities and is designed to support good practice, and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability decisions.
- Ensure advice is given on all financial matters, proper financial records and accounts are kept, and oversees an effective system of internal financial control.

- Comply with the Financial Management Code (FM Code) which sets out the standards of financial management expected for local authorities and is designed to support good practice, and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability.
- When making our budget calculations, ensure that the Chief Finance Officer S151 reports to Council on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations, and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- Follow CIPFA's Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice which set out the risk framework through which the Council manages its balance sheet and makes capital investment decisions.
- Maintain strategies and processes detailing our approach to decision making on capital investments, and treasury management

G - Assurance and Effective Accountability

G1 - Implementing Good Practice in transparency,

- We follow the Local Government Transparency Code, which includes requirements and recommendations for local authorities to publish certain types of data. The council is committed to being open and transparent about its financial affairs.
- Details of all council expenditure over £500 are published on the council's website
- Our pay policy statement is published on line as is details of senior officer remuneration
- We publish our contract register which contains details of all contracts for the supply of goods and services to the council that have a value in excess of £5,000.
- Internal audit independently and critically evaluates the council's internal control framework and, where necessary, makes recommendations for improvement and the introduction of best practice.

- The Head of Internal Audit presents an annual report to Audit Committee to provide an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's internal control environment.
- The Audit Committee meet to receive the reports of both Internal and External Audit.

G2 – Implementing good practice in reporting

- We report on finance and performance against our plans on a quarterly basis to Cabinet.
- We ensure that the Executive Leadership team receive reports from our Governance Boards to ensure identified challenges can be addressed.
- We produce an annual State of the Borough report

G3 - Assurance and effective accountability

Internally we have six Assurance Boards, reporting into Executive Leadership Team and Members Assurance Group through a monthly highlight report which will also be shared with the Cabinet Members. The Boards are chaired by an Executive Director and attended by Directors. The assurance boards meet monthly, with clear Terms of Reference, work programmes, a lead Officer and action notes/action tracker. The Assurance Boards are:

- Commercial
- Finance
- Governance and Assurance
- Performance, Delivery and Transformation
- Property and Estates
- Regeneration

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meet weekly, chaired by the Chief Executive and with formal action notes and action tracking by the Chief Executives PA. Attendance to include all Executive Directors and statutory officers. The standing agenda will include:

- Delivery of the improvement plan
- Corporate assurance, through a highlight report from each Board on a rotating basis and updates on workforce and budget monitoring
- The decision making forward plan and meeting preparation
- The GM interface
- Communications messages for dissemination

A weekly Member Assurance Group is held to facilitate private political briefing and challenge on key areas of risk, membership to include, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and the Chief Executive. Action notes and action log are to be produced and shared weekly at ELT. Other Officers to attend by invitation – key areas of focus:

- Internal audit recommendations
 - Financial transformation
 - Estates, including the corporate landlord, and estates compliance
 - Project Safety Valve.
- A consistent structure, including a standardised agenda is applied to Departmental Management Teams, which will support the Board structure by providing oversight and assurance of Business-as-Usual activity including workforce and budget management. Standard Agenda to include:
 - Operational overview and update, including update/feedback to Directors from ELT
 - Actions/issues from Assurance Boards
 - Highlight reports from corporate business partners, provided on at least a quarterly basis
 - Decision making
 - The Strategic Leaders' Group of Council Directors meet on a quarterly basis with a specific remit to develop a high-performance culture.

- Elected Member Oversight will be provided via regular reporting into the Council's Audit Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A standardised agenda will be re-developed for consideration at Cabinet Portfolio Meetings, which will include internal audit reports and assurance board highlight report.

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Classification	Item No.
Open / Closed	

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Meeting date:	1 st July 2025
Title of report:	Remote Meeting Attendance & Proxy Voting Update
Report by:	Michael Cunliffe, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Decision Type:	N/A Report for information only
Ward(s) to which report relates	All

Executive Summary:

Following time-limited Covid remote attendance permissions that expired in 2021, local authority meetings have been required to be held in a single, specified, physical 'place'.

On the 24th October 2024, the government published a consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings. The consultation closed on the 19th December 2024 and received 5,844 responses. The consultation sought views on the practical implications of allowing remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings.

Consultation Results:

The multiple-choice responses to each question were analysed and broken down. The majority (63%) of responses to this consultation came from elected members. Most other responses were on behalf of councils themselves (22%) or from members of the public (15%). 32 responses received were from sector representative bodies. Respondents who responded in their capacity as an elected member or on behalf of a council body were asked to indicate what type of local authority they represent. Most responses came from town or parish councils (3,327) and district or borough councils (858).

A significant majority (86%) of respondents were in favour of the broad principle of allowing remote attendance at council meetings. Support for remote attendance was consistently high across the different respondent categories.

Over half of respondents (56%) who were in favour of the broad principle of remote attendance at council meetings did not think that there should be limitations placed on remote attendance. A third

of respondents thought that elected members should only be able to attend meetings remotely in exceptional circumstances, and a third thought that two thirds of elected members at a meeting should be present in person.

The analysis of responses identified three key themes: digital limitations, the risk of bias and inclusion in local democracy.

- 1. On digital limitations, some authorities (particularly parish councils) noted that they may not have equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings. Some respondents noted concerns about whether members joining online would fully participate in meetings; others were concerned about whether hybrid or fully remote meetings would reduce public access to meetings, or impact the quality of meetings.*
- 2. On risk of bias, some respondents noted concerns about who would develop and implement limitations on remote attendance: many respondents felt that these decisions should be made by councils, because they best understand their local challenges, while some noted that this would place a burden on councils and result in possible challenges of bias if limitations excluded specific groups or were perceived to be unfair.*
- 3. In relation to inclusion, respondents noted that allowing online attendance would encourage more people to become councillors. Respondents believed that remote attendance may remove barriers to becoming a councillor for people with disabilities or caring responsibilities.*

Most responses from elected members indicated that they may seek to attend some meetings remotely (74%).

Some respondents noted that they felt that in-person attendance makes elected members more accountable for their actions, and the decisions made. Other respondents noted that online and hybrid meetings could be more complex to run and reduce productive engagement.

Most respondents indicated that they would attend meetings remotely very occasionally (49%) or from time to time (38%). Very few respondents anticipated attending remotely all the time (2%).

Three quarters of responses on behalf of councils believed that less than half of their members would seek to attend meetings remotely over the course of a year. Only 11% indicated that almost all of their members (90% to 100%) would seek to attend meetings remotely.

Only 16% of respondents thought that councils should not have the flexibility to meet fully remotely under any circumstances. Other responses were split between preferring that councils could meet fully remotely at up to half of their meetings (38%) and preferring that councils could only meet remotely in exceptional circumstances (46%).

Themes of inclusion and transparency were raised, and some respondents mentioned that remote meetings would be beneficial in the context of climate change and reducing emissions. Other respondents noted the benefits of remote meetings for rural councils with poor public transport provision.

Proxy Voting:

Respondents were narrowly opposed to the principle of introducing proxy voting measures, with 47% answering “no” and 36% answering “yes”.

Broadly speaking, responses from members of councils and members of the public were more evenly split, while responses on behalf of councils and sector representative bodies were overwhelmingly opposed.

Some respondents felt that proxy voting should be allowed in all instances where an elected member cannot attend a meeting; others felt that it should be reviewed case by case.

Respondents generally identified key issues in relation to proxy voting in response to this question, rather than identifying specific circumstances in which proxy voting would not be appropriate. Themes included the potential lack of accountability, pre-determined voting, and misuse. Some respondents felt that proxy voting would not be necessary if meetings could be held remotely or in a hybrid form.

Respondents suggested limiting the number of proxy votes a year, limiting the circumstances in which they can be used (personal limitations or meeting limitations), and ensuring clear records.

Conclusion:

The government is of the view that in-person authority meetings remain vital for local democracy, but that hybrid and remote attendance, and proxy voting, will enable local authorities in England to develop more modern, accessible, and flexible working practices.

Arguments for and against remote attendance and proxy voting have been carefully considered and the government plan to legislate support for permanent provision in relation to both policies, when parliamentary time allows.

On remote attendance, the government aims to permit local authorities to develop their own locally appropriate policies, if they decide to hold remote meetings.

On proxy voting, the plan is to require principal (unitary, upper and second-tier) councils to implement proxy voting schemes, to provide consistency for members who are absent when they become a new parent, or for serious or long-term illness. This requirement would apply to meetings of full council. For all other meetings, proxy voting may be used but will not be required, and substitute or pairing schemes may be more appropriate.

The government will work collaboratively with the relevant sectors to develop clear and supportive guidance in relation to both remote attendance and proxy voting policies.

Recommendation(s):

That the Standards Committee note the update and a further report be produced once more information is released.

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