

# AGENDA FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE



*Contact: Michael Cunliffe  
Direct Line: 0161 253 5399  
E-mail: [m.cunliffe@bury.gov.uk](mailto:m.cunliffe@bury.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.bury.gov.uk](http://www.bury.gov.uk)*

**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:-

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday, 26 November 2025
<b>Place:</b>	Bury Town Hall
<b>Time:</b>	6.00 pm
<b>Briefing Facilities:</b>	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)*
- 4 MEMBER ATTENDANCE STATISTICS** *(Pages 7 - 36)*
- 5 STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND** *(Pages 37 - 46)*
- 6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDANCE** *(Pages 47 - 72)*
- 7 URGENT BUSINESS**
- 8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

6.00pm, Thursday 12th February 2026

<b>Minutes of:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
<b>Present:</b>	Councillor N Bayley (in the Chair) Councillors S Arif, A Booth, R Gold, M Hayes, J Hook, D Quinn, M Rahimov and D Vernon
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services. Michael Cunliffe, Democratic Services. Independent Persons: Craig Ainsworth and Stuart Birtwell
<b>Public Attendance:</b>	No members of the public or press were present at the meeting.

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## **1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors K Hussain and T Rafiq. Councillor S. Arif acted as a substitute representative for Councillor Hussain.

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 were approved as a correct record.

## **4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDANCE**

Jacqui Dennis reported that this item was included on the work programme for 2025-2026. The draft version of the guidance was not ready for inclusion on the agenda with additions required from the communications and policy departments.

### **It was agreed:**

That the item be deferred for inclusion on a future meeting agenda.

## **5 CODE OF CONDUCT- ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Monitoring Officer, Jacqui Dennis reported a revised code of conduct was previously agreed by the Members of the Standards Committee and subsequently agreed by Council. The Committee recommended that the code was annually reviewed by this Committee whilst Members had also adopted a guide to the code.

Previously, the Standards Committee approved a revised Member code of conduct following a recommendation from a subgroup of the Committee. Consideration was given to the Council's existing Code of Conduct for Members following the publication of the Local Government Ethical Standards report produced by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) and the Local Government Association's (LGA) Model Code of Conduct (LGA's Model Code). At that time, it was noted that the code had not been updated following the introduction of a revised model code. Members considered the guidance in detail and a new code was agreed.

At a subsequent Standards meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024, Members agreed guidance to accompany the code of conduct. The Guidance was brought forward by the Committee to

assist and aid members understanding of the code and to give examples of what behaviour may result in a breach of the code of conduct.

Training on the revised code was provided to all Members following the introduction of the new code. Training on the code is provided annually by the Monitoring Officer.

Members were asked to review the code and consider whether any revisions are needed to the code or guidance. Any changes to the code would need to be approved by Council. Therefore, Monitoring Officer would welcome Members view on whether there are particular areas of the code that should be the focus for the next Member training later this year.

A Member asked was there anything missing from the code or had anything cropped up over the last 12 months. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that bullying and harassment is a frequent complaint made but at times there is not enough evidence to proceed with an investigation. Social media issues had also seen a rise and work was required on Member safety guidance to combat any inappropriate behaviour by members of the public.

The Independent Member, Craig Ainsworth commented that Members can be unwittingly goaded by members of the public online resulting in a complaint being submitted and they should think carefully before instantly replying. This could be included in the training and that the tone of a reply via social media should be appropriate. He added that training was provided to individual political groups last year and those Councillors who did not attend should be informed to attend the session this year and group leaders informed. Any Member not trained for over 12 months should be flagged. The Monitoring Officer would liaise with group whips and Councillor Rahimov commented that the handbook advised Members must attend.

## **It was agreed:-**

That Members would review the code of conduct (Appendix 1) and guidance to Members on the code of conduct (Appendix 2) and communicate to the Monitoring Officer any revisions to the code and guidance following the review.

## **6**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2024-25**

The Monitoring Officer, Jacqui Dennis reported on the findings and recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for 2024-2025.

The Committee discussed the Annual Review Letter 2024-25 which was publicly available and highlighted:-

- For Bury 71% of complaints investigated were upheld compared to an average of 81% in similar authorities.
- 10 cases were investigated and upheld
- 4 cases were investigated and not upheld
- The number of complaints and enquiries received for 24/25 as compared to 23/24 had increased slightly.

In summary, between the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the LGO dealt with 89 complaints. Of these, 38 were not for them or not ready for investigation. The LGO assessed and closed 37 complaints and investigated 14 complaints.

The LGO have advised on comparing statistics across the years and that they previously changed their investigation processes. This contributed towards an increase in the average

uphold rate across all complaints. Members should consider comparing individual Council uphold rates against the average rate rather than against previous years.

Complaints about education and children's services are still dominating the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's casework, but housing cases were now the second biggest area of concern for people complaining.

The LGO Annual Review of Local Government Complaints in England for 2024-2025 was attached to the agenda pack and pulled together the national picture of trends and common issues that have arisen from complaints over the last year.

The Monitoring Officer was pleased to report that the LGO had noted the Council's significant improvement in dealing with LGO cases.

A Member asked about a visual table of complaints and the Clerk to the meeting had circulated spreadsheets with the agenda packs to Members to detail the data for the year.

A Member enquired if there had been any follow with raising performance concerns with individual authorities in July. No issues were reported to the Council after publication of the annual letter.

A Member who was also part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked about financial impacts throughout the year in forms of compensation payments. The Clerk to the meeting would source and provide this information ready for the Scrutiny meeting taking place in the late Autumn period.

**It was agreed:-**

- (a) That the content of the Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter to the Council be noted; and:-
- (b) That the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman referred to the Council during 2024/25 and their outcomes be noted.

**7 URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent business was reported.

**8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Standards Committee meeting was scheduled to take place at 6.00pm on Wednesday the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at Bury Town Hall.

**COUNCILLOR N BAYLEY**  
**Chair**

**(Note: The meeting started at 5.30pm and ended at 6.15pm)**

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<b>Classification</b>	<b>Item No.</b>
<b>Open / Closed</b>	

<b>Meeting:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Meeting date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
<b>Title of report:</b>	Member Attendance Statistics
<b>Report by:</b>	Michael Cunliffe, Principal Democratic Services Officer
<b>Decision Type:</b>	N/A Report for information only
<b>Ward(s) to which report relates</b>	(Not applicable)

### Executive Summary:

This report sets out all Councillor attendance at public Committee meetings from the beginning of the municipal year (May 2025) until Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

This summary includes 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.

### Recommendation(s)

That Councillor attendance at meetings be noted.

### Attendance Statistics

#### Explanation of the statistics counts

- **Expected** - The number of meetings that the councillor was expected to attend, whether in person or virtually, in their capacity as member of that committee.

- **Present** - The number of meetings that the councillor attended in their capacity as member of that committee.
- **In attendance** - The number of meetings that the councillor attended in a capacity other than committee member, for example a voluntary attendance out of personal interest for a topic being discussed.
- **Apologies sent** – Meetings not attended, where the Councillor is a member of the committee, where apologies were submitted.
- **Absent** - Meetings not attended, where the Councillor is a member of the committee, where apologies were not submitted.

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### **Community impact/links with Community Strategy**

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#### **Equality Impact and considerations:**

An equalities analysis is not required.

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#### **Assessment of Risk:**

Councillor non-attendance can result in inquorate meetings. Regular reporting of attendance statistics mitigates this risk by giving early notice to Councillors of possible concerns and allowing early resolution. The monitoring also highlights any Members who may not have attended meetings for some time in advance of the 6 month attendance regulation.

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#### **Consultation:**

N/A

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#### **Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications.

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#### **Financial Implications:**

There are no financial implications.

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#### **Report Author and Contact Details:**

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Michael Cunliffe, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
Democratic Services  
[m.cunliffe@bury.gov.uk](mailto:m.cunliffe@bury.gov.uk)

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**Background papers:**

None.

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

Term	Meaning
N/A	

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**Meeting attendance summary of all Councillors**

**Attendance statistics for Councillor Ayesha Arif for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>79%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>21%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Shahbaz Arif for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>85%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>50% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>15%</u></b>

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Attendance statistics for Councillor Noel Bayley for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Total expected attendances:</u>	<u>8</u>	
<u>Present as expected:</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>

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Attendance statistics for Councillor Russell Bernstein for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Total expected attendances:</u>	<u>24</u>	
<u>Present as expected:</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>88%</u>
<u>Apologies received:</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100% of absences</u>
<u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>12%</u>
<u>In attendance:</u>	<u>4</u>	

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Attendance statistics for Councillor Donald Berry for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Total expected attendances:</u>	<u>16</u>	
<u>Present as expected:</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>

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Attendance statistics for Councillor Carol Birchmore for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Total expected attendances:</u>	<u>8</u>	
<u>Present as expected:</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
<u>In attendance:</u>	<u>2</u>	

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Ciaran Boles for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>0%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Andrea Booth for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>0%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Roger Brown for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>	<b><u>70%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>30%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Clare Cummins for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>61%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>	<b><u>39%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Des Duncalfe for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>92%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>8%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Ummrana Farooq for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>73%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>27%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Elizabeth FitzGerald for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	<b><u>94%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>6%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Nikki Frith for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>62%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>38%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Iain Gartside for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>86%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>14%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Richard Gold for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>29</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>27</u></b>	<b><u>93%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>7%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Debra Green for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>24</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>24</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>0%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Joan Grimshaw for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>25</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>20</u></b>	<b><u>80%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>20%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Shaheena Haroon for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>0%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Jackie Harris for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>73%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>50% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>27%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Martin Hayes for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>	<b><u>94%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>6%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Jodie Hook for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>86%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>14%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Khalid Hussain for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>	<b><u>90%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>10%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Babar Ibrahim for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	<b><u>94%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>6%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Jo Lancaster for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>92%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>8%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Glyn Marsden for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	<b><u>93%</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>7%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Luis McBriar for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>73%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>27%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Gavin McGill for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>92%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>8%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Charlotte Morris for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>91%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>9%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Elliot Moss for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>0%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Eamonn O'Brien for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	<b><u>93%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>7%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Tom Pilkington for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>	<b><u>73%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>27%</u></b>

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Attendance statistics for Councillor Alan Quinn for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Total expected attendances:</u>	<u>16</u>	
<u>Present as expected:</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>

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Attendance statistics for Councillor Debbie Quinn for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Total expected attendances:</u>	<u>22</u>	
<u>Present as expected:</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>82%</u>
<u>Apologies received:</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100% of absences</u>
<u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>18%</u>
<u>Apologies due to council business:</u>	<u>1</u>	

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Tahir Rafiq for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>21</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>	<b><u>90%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>10%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Miriam Rahimov for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>92%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>8%</u></b>
<b><u>In attendance:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Imran Rizvi for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	<b><u>82%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>67% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>18%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Michael Rubinstein for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>0%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Jack Rydeheard for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>83%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>17%</u></b>
<b><u>In attendance:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Lynn Ryder for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	<b><u>93%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>7%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Ken Simpson for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>91%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>9%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Lucy Smith for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>25</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>21</u></b>	<b><u>84%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>75% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>16%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Mike Smith for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>86%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>14%</u></b>
<b><u>In attendance:</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	

**Attendance statistics for Councillor John Southworth for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	<b><u>93%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>7%</u></b>



**Attendance statistics for Councillor Gareth Staples-Jones for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>	<b><u>94%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>6%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Tamoor Tariq for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>28</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>26</u></b>	<b><u>93%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>7%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Sean Thorpe for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>92%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>8%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Dene Vernon for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>86%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>14%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Sandra Walmsley for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>85%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>15%</u></b>

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**Attendance statistics for Councillor Mary Walsh for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025**

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b><u>Total expected attendances:</u></b>	<b><u>35</u></b>	
<b><u>Present as expected:</u></b>	<b><u>33</u></b>	<b><u>94%</u></b>
<b><u>Apologies received:</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>100% of absences</u></b>
<b><u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>6%</u></b>

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Attendance statistics for Councillor Yvonne Wright for period 21/05/2025 - 17/11/2025

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Total expected attendances:</u>	<u>5</u>	
<u>Present as expected:</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Absent (incl. apologies):</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>

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<b>Classification</b>	<b>Item No.</b>
<b>Open / Closed</b>	

<b>Meeting:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Meeting date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
<b>Title of report:</b>	Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England
<b>Report by:</b>	Jacqui Dennis, Director Law & Governance
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Report for information only
<b>Ward(s) to which report relates</b>	Not applicable

### Executive Summary:

The Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England consultation sought views from members of the public, current and prospective local authority elected members, local government officers from all types and tiers of authorities, and local authority sector representative organisations. This report sets out an update for Members on the consultation outcomes, government proposals and provides Members with details of how the proposals differ from the current standards regime.

The Governments statement is set out in Annex 1 to this report.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the update and ask that the Monitoring Officer to ensure regular progress updates are provided to the Committee.

## **Consultation outcome**

The proposals and 40 consultation questions were arranged under 2 principal headings as follows:

### Strengthening the Standards and Conduct framework

- mandatory minimum prescribed code of conduct
- Standards Committees
- publication of allegations and investigation outcomes
- requiring completion of investigations if an elected member stands down
- empowering individuals affected by councillor misconduct to come forward

### Introducing the power of suspension with related safeguards

- length of suspension
- withholding allowances and premises and facilities bans
- interim suspension
- disqualification for multiple breaches and gross misconduct
- appeals process
- potential for a national appeals body

The Localism Act 2011 established the current standards and conduct framework for local authorities.

The current regime requires every local authority to adopt a code of conduct, the contents of which must, as a minimum, be consistent with the 7 'Nolan' principles of standards in public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership) and set out rules on requiring members to register and disclose pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. Beyond these requirements, it is for individual councils to set their own local code.

Every principal authority must also have in place arrangements under which it can investigate allegations of breaches of its code of conduct and must consult at least one Independent Person before coming to decisions.

There is no provision in current legislation for a sanction to suspend a councillor found to have breached the code of conduct. Sanctions for member code of conduct breaches are typically:

- barring members from cabinet, committee, or representative roles
- a requirement to issue an apology or undergo code of conduct training
- publication of outcome of standards hearings

Local authorities are also unable to withhold allowances from elected members who commit serious breaches of their code of conduct, and there is no explicit provision in legislation for authorities to impose premises bans or facilities withdrawals where they consider that it might be beneficial to do so.

The lack of meaningful sanctions, or the power to suspend elected members for serious code of conduct breaches, means local authorities have no effective way of dealing with more serious examples of member misconduct.

This government response document follows the order of the proposals as set out in the consultation document referred to above. Under each proposal there is:

- a headline summary of the responses received
- a summary of the policy considerations
- a statement of government's intended course of action in response

### Standards Committees

To strengthen and support the consistent handling of misconduct allegations, government proposed that all principal authorities, and strategic authorities, should be required to convene a standards committee.

Some 91% of respondents agreed that all principal authorities should be required to form a standards committee.

Comments focused mainly on the following recurring themes:

- that without effective strengthened sanctions the requirement to form a standards committee would of itself make little impact on misconduct
- concerns about how to achieve political impartiality amongst the membership of the committee to ensure that decisions on code of conduct investigations are objective

As well as the function of receiving code of conduct investigation reports and determining as appropriate any sanction, government considers that standards committees also have a crucial role in promoting and upholding a culture of high ethical standards for an authority. Numerous respondents commented that there is a need for more to be done in this regard to emphasise a greater individual and collective responsibility for ensuring that the corporate culture of every authority rightly prioritises respectful discourse between elected and co-opted members, officers and the public.

62% of respondents agreed that sanction decisions on formal investigations into code of conduct breach allegations should be heard and taken by a standards committee. The government proposes to legislate for this.

In response to the question of whether Independent Persons and co-opted members serving on standards committees should be given voting rights, 68% agreed this is important to ensure objectivity and 63% considered that standards committees should be chaired by an Independent Person. Government considers that co-opted members should have voting rights.

Government considers that there is merit in standards committees being chaired by someone who is independent and not an elected member of the authority, but that it would not be appropriate to be the Independent Person whose role is defined in law as an advisor on standards investigations.

The Localism Act 2011 (Chapter 7, section 28(7)) requires every relevant authority to appoint at least one Independent Person, whose views must be sought and considered by the authority before it decides on an allegation which has been investigated. There is no intention to change the role of the Independent Person.

Views expressed on ensuring fairness and objectivity and reducing incidences of vexatious complaints coalesced around the following themes:

- constituting committees to ensure political impartiality

- providing the option of appropriately strengthened sanctions to ensure that a standards committee is equipped to effectively address misconduct and that members subject to a complaint take the process seriously
- ensuring that members of standards committees receive appropriate training

Government believes that the consultation responses confirm that confidence in political impartiality of standards committees is important to ensure that every complainant and elected or co-opted member subject to a code of conduct allegation are consistently treated fairly and objectively.

To achieve political impartiality on decisions taken in response to a code of conduct investigation, the government will engage further with sector representatives on what the optimum membership arrangements for standards committees should be prior to finalising the detail of requirements in legislation.

On the question of whether local authorities should be required to publish annually a list of allegations of code of conduct breaches, and any investigation outcomes views varied. 47% considered that the public should have full access to all allegations and investigation outcomes, while 50% thought only cases in which a member is found guilty of wrongdoing should be published.

Government considers that local authorities should only be required to publish a list of code of conduct allegations following full investigation and a standards committee determination on whether to uphold the complaint or not, and as appropriate any sanction applied. This avoids the risk of allegations whilst an investigation is ongoing being in the public domain at a point when it is yet to be resolved.

The final question in the standards committee section of the consultation asked for views about whether investigations should continue to their conclusion if the member stands down before a determination on their case is arrived at, and if the investigation findings should still be published. A total of 84% of respondents agreed with this proposal.

Government considers that it is important to be consistent in holding to account any member who breaches the code of conduct or provide the opportunity for that individual to be publicly exonerated where an investigation concludes there was no case to answer regardless of if they stand down during an investigation.

In response to the views expressed with regards to standards committees the government:

- proposes to legislate to require all relevant principal authorities to formally constitute a standards committee (or, as appropriate, a sub-committee convened for the purposes of considering code of conduct cases); and engage further with sector representatives to consider the specific requirements for the membership of standards committees prior to legislating on the matter
- will require, subject to relevant legal restrictions, any code of conduct investigation to be completed, and investigation findings and decisions arising be published, including when the investigation findings are 'no case to answer' and the member is exonerated, and in the event a member stands down during an investigation.

In addition, government will:



- engage with sector representative bodies and stakeholder to develop 'best practice' guidance on the handling of code of conduct complaint allegations
- retain the statutory responsibility of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected members and co-opted members on the authority and engage with sector representative organisations to consider developing guidance on what more could be done by individual authority standards committees to deliver on this responsibility

### **Changes to current regime**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Current Regime</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>
Code of Conduct	Local codes based on Nolan Principles	Mandatory national code with behavioural standards and duty to cooperate
Standards Committee	Discretionary; often advisory only	Mandatory for all principal authorities; independent chair and voting rights for co-opted members
Sanctions	Limited (apology, training, removal from roles)	Suspension up to 6 months; option to withhold allowances; premises/facilities bans
Interim Suspension	Not permitted	Allowed for serious allegations under police investigation or pending court proceedings
Support for Parties	Minimal; no statutory requirement	Formal support for complainants and respondents; best practice guidance
Right of Review	Not required	Statutory right for both complainant and subject member
Appeals	No formal route; judicial review only	National appeals body after local review
Disqualification	Only for criminal convictions	Disqualification if suspended twice for 6 months within 5 years

Publication of Outcomes	Discretionary	Mandatory publication of investigation outcomes, including exonerations
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Frequently asked questions have been drafted which will be added to once the guidance and proposals become law, these are appended at Appendix 2 for Members to review.

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**Report Author and Contact Details:**

Jacqui Dennis – Director of Law & Governance  
[J.dennis@bury.gov.uk](mailto:J.dennis@bury.gov.uk)

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**Background papers:**

[Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)

## Appendix A

### Government statement

*The government is committed to greater devolution, determined to fix the foundations of local government and build a better future for local politics.*

*Greater devolution relies on local authorities in which elected members embody the highest standards of conduct. The public rightly demand its representatives act in their best interests, and that those who do not meet the high standards of public office expected should be held to account and appropriately sanctioned.*

*The 'Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England' consultation sought views on a whole system reform of the standards and conduct framework for local government. The proposed reforms consulted on reflected the government's ambition to introduce a clearer and consistently applied standards and conduct framework for local government in England.*

*The reforms aim to ensure misconduct is dealt with swiftly and fairly across the country in every type and tier of local government – from the smallest town or parish council to the largest regional mayoral authority. We want to ensure that local government is empowered, fully accountable and deserving of people's trust and confidence.*

*We want local and regional government in England to attract and retain the best possible talent, and for county, town and city halls across the country to promote fair and reasonable democratic discourse, without slipping into cultures which are toxic and intimidating. There will always be room for strongly held beliefs to be represented, tested and debated, with decency and respectful behaviours and conduct.*

*Of note amongst the consultation responses was testimony received from those who highlighted the personal distress persistent bullying and harassment can cause for elected members and officers alike, particularly as the current regime offers no real prospect of perpetrators being properly held to account.*

*In response, our reforms will put victims of elected member misconduct at the centre of the system by providing a right to appeal standards decisions and ensure that both complainants and respondents are supported throughout the process of code of conduct investigations. We also want to ensure that those complained about are given fair opportunity to make representations and that due process is in place throughout the course of complaints being considered.*

*Frustration with the lack of meaningful sanctions and safeguards, even when elected members are under police investigation or carry out repeated breaches, was also clearly apparent amongst respondents. For a standards regime to be fit for purpose it must provide both appropriate safeguards and sanctions.*

*I want to thank all the 2,092 respondents to this consultation. The results have clearly indicated there is widespread appetite for system reform and the steers we have received from respondents have shaped our decisions on the policy proposals this document confirms we will now be working to take forward.*

*In summary, we intend to legislate for a whole system reform of the current regime as set out in Localism Act 2011. The measures will include:*

- *the introduction of a mandatory code of conduct, which will include a behavioural code, for all local authority types and tiers*
- *a requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards committees, to include provisions on the constitution of standards committees to ensure objectivity, accountability and transparency*
- *the requirement that all principal authorities offer individual support during any investigation into code of conduct allegations to both the complainant and the councillor subject to the allegation*
- *the introduction at the authority level of a 'right for review' for both complainant and the subject elected member to have the case reassessed on grounds that will be set out in legislation*
- *powers for authorities to suspend elected members for a maximum of 6 months for serious code of conduct breaches, with the option to withhold allowances during suspension for the most serious breaches and introduce premises and facilities bans either in addition or as standalone sanctions*
- *in response to the most serious allegations involving police investigation, or where sentencing is pending, the introduction of powers to suspend elected members on an interim basis for an initial period of 3 months which, if extended, will require regular review*
- *a new disqualification criterion for any elected member subject to the maximum period of suspension more than once within 5 years*
- *the creation of a new national appeals function, to consider appeals from elected members to decisions to suspend them and/or withhold allowances, and for complainants if they consider their complaint was mishandled. Any appeal submitted will only be permitted after complainant or elected member has invoked their 'right for review' of the local standards committee decision has been invoked and that process is completed*

*When this government took office, we pledged to reset the relationship with local authorities, and a key part of that commitment is to work creatively and collaboratively with all those with an interest in local government. We will continue to engage with the sector and stakeholders whilst we develop the detail of operationalising these proposals.*

*I know that most local elected members are public servants working hard to help shape and deliver excellent local public services. It is for them as much as council employees and the public that we are determined to deal with those who bring local government into disrepute. In recognition of how important these reforms are to building a better future for local politics, we intend to bring forward the necessary legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.*

**Alison McGovern MP**

**Minister for Local Government and Homelessness**

## Appendix 2

### **FAQ for Members**

#### **What does suspension mean for my role?**

Suspension can last up to 6 months for serious breaches. During suspension, you may lose allowances and access to council premises/facilities.

#### **Will I still receive my allowance if suspended?**

Not necessarily. Standards committees will have discretion to withhold allowances for serious breaches.

#### **What is interim suspension?**

This applies when serious allegations are under police investigation or pending court proceedings. It lasts up to 3 months initially, with regular reviews.

#### **Can I appeal a suspension decision?**

Yes. You will have a local right of review first. If still dissatisfied, you can appeal to a national appeals body.

#### **What happens if I am suspended twice?**

If you receive two suspensions of the maximum 6-month period within 5 years, you will be disqualified from office.

#### **Will complaints against me be published?**

Yes, but only after investigations conclude. Outcomes will include whether the complaint was upheld or dismissed.

#### **What support will I get during an investigation?**

Government plans to require councils to provide individual support for both complainants and respondents, including guidance and possibly access to independent advice.

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<b>Classification</b>	<b>Item No.</b>
<b>Open / Closed</b>	

<b>Meeting:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Meeting date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
<b>Title of report:</b>	Public Participation
<b>Report by:</b>	Jacqui Dennis, Director Law & Governance
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Members are asked to approve and recommend amended public participation guidance to Council
<b>Ward(s) to which report relates</b>	All

### Executive Summary:

As part of the annual review of the constitution Members are asked to consider the public participation guidance which forms part of our constitution. Under Part 5 section 6 of our constitution the guidance sets out the role that public participation plays, it encourages citizens to participate in the Council decision making processes and provides an overview of how they can input in to the wider community.

The current public participation guidance has not been recently update and this report sets out proposals for changes to the current guidance.

### Recommendation(s)

Consider the reviewed public participation guidance.

To recommend finalised guidance on public participation to Council

.

## Summary

The current public participation guidance is appended to the report at Appendix 1. As set out above the guidance has been updated to provide citizens with further detail of how they can actively participate in the Borough, the revised guidance is set out at Appendix 2 to this report. The revised draft sets out details of how the Council approaches consultation and how it communicates with citizens.

A healthy democracy depends on active citizenship. The Council's Public Participation Guidance sets out how residents can:

- Attend and observe meetings.
- Ask questions at public meetings.
- Submit petitions.
- Engage through consultations and community networks.
- Access information about decisions.
- Participate in planning and scrutiny processes.
- Vote in elections and volunteer locally.

Councillors play a key role in enabling participation, ensuring transparency, and representing community views, the roles of Councillors and Officers is set out in the guidance.

## Key Elements of Public Participation

### 1. Attending Meetings

- Public encouraged to attend Council and committee meetings in person or online.
- Meetings of Council and Cabinet are live-streamed.
- Agendas and papers published at least five working days in advance.
- Social media reporting permitted if it does not disrupt proceedings.
- Filming allowed with prior notice to the Chair or Democratic Services Officer.

### 2. Asking Questions

- Questions can be asked at Full Council, Cabinet, Health & Wellbeing Board, Licensing & Safety, Scrutiny Committees, and Locality Boards.
- Anyone living, working, or studying in Bury may submit questions.
- Notice required: by midday two working days before the meeting.
- One question per person, plus one supplementary question allowed.
- Responses may be oral or written within 10 working days.

### 3. Petitions

- Petitions welcomed on matters within Council powers.
- Must include a clear statement, names, and addresses of signatories (minimum 50).
- Online submission preferred.
- Petitions with 2,500+ signatories can be presented at Full Council.



## 4. Consultation and Engagement

- Consultation ensures community views inform decisions.
- Engagement is ongoing dialogue through neighbourhood teams, thematic forums (e.g., Circles of Influence for young people), and PACT meetings.
- Council uses a Consultation Checklist for statutory and best practice compliance.
- Live consultations published on Council website.

## 5. Communications Channels

- Website, social media, local media, newsletters, community networks, and face-to-face events.
- Principles: clear, accurate, timely, accessible, and two-way.

## 6. Other Participation Routes

- **Planning:** Comment on applications; speak at Planning Committee.
- **Scrutiny:** Suggest topics for review; submit evidence.
- **Voting:** Register and vote in local and national elections.
- **Volunteering:** Opportunities include community groups, school governors, befriending schemes ([buryvcfa.org.uk](http://buryvcfa.org.uk)). Represent ward and borough interests.

## 7. Role of the Councillor

- Facilitate community engagement and respond to residents' concerns, by asking questions, speaking at Committees, presenting petitions or motions.
- Be contacted to discuss your problem or ideas to improve the ward or borough
- Help you if you need information or are dissatisfied with a Council service by advising or directing you to someone who can help sort out your problem, and can sometimes progress the case on your behalf as a community leader, put forward proposals to improve the ward they represent which may include bringing together different community groups to develop a case for change
- Work with partners and officers to shape policy and services.

The proposed revised guidance also contains the following amendments which if adopted will require further constitutional changes –

- Ability of citizens to ask questions at the Bee Network forum
- Expansion of those who can ask questions at meeting from residents of Bury to include and those studying in Bury

## Report Author and Contact Details:

Jacqui Dennis – Director of Law & Governance

[J.dennis@bury.gov.uk](mailto:J.dennis@bury.gov.uk)

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**Background papers:**

## Part 5: Section 6 - Public participation guide

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**A healthy democracy depends upon active citizenship. Citizens are encouraged to make conscientious use of their roles as both voters and members of a wider community, and this guide gives an overview of the ways in which you can do that.**

- Attending meetings

We encourage the public to attend all meetings of the Council and its committees, that are held in person or remotely in some circumstances and anyone attending is able to record or film what takes place at them provided that doesn't disrupt the meeting. Details of what meetings are coming up are published on the Council's website.

The agenda and papers are normally published on our website at least five working days in advance of the meeting. Draft minutes of the meeting are also published on the website as soon as possible after the meeting.

- Why are some meetings private?

On some occasions an agenda item includes information which may be personal to an individual, which would compromise the commercial position of the council or another individual or organisation or which there are other particular legal or employment reasons for considering asking the public to leave the meeting for discussion of that item. When this is the case we will explain the reasons why and, as far as is legally possible, will afterwards provide a public summary of the decision taken.

- Asking questions at meetings of the Council

*Which meetings can the public ask questions at?*

Questions can be asked at public meetings of:

- The Full Council
- Cabinet
- Health and wellbeing board
- Licensing and Safety Committee
- Scrutiny committees

### *Who can ask questions?*

Questions can be put by anyone living or working in Bury.

### *What notice is required for questions?*

A question must be delivered by email ([democraticservices@Bury.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@Bury.gov.uk)) by no later than Midday two working days before the date of the meeting. Each question must provide the name and residential/business address of the questioner.

### *How many questions can be asked?*

A member of the public may ask one\* question at any public meeting of the Council as listed above. (\*=See below for supplementary questions)

### *What is the scope for questions?*

Questions should relate to the function of the committee where they are being asked. A question at the full Council can be addressed to any Chair or Cabinet Member and must relate either to something that the Council is responsible for or that affects the borough.

We will not consider any question that is defamatory, offensive or frivolous.

### *What happens at the meeting?*

Time is made available early on the agenda for any accepted questions to be dealt with. Copies of any questions and answers will be published on the Council's website before the start of the meeting, and will be made available to members of the public who attend the meeting.

The Chair will invite the questioner to put a supplementary question to the Councillor named in the notice.

A questioner who has put a question in person can also ask one supplementary question, without notice, in response to the reply to their question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply given. The chair can reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds detailed in the section above.

### *What form will the reply take?*

The answer may be either a direct oral answer, a referral to an existing publication, or if the question requests service information a referral to an officer to respond in writing. If the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, if the questioner or the member to whom the question is put is absent, or the time

allowed for public questions has expired, a written answer will normally be provided within ten working days.

There cannot be any discussion on questions but any matters raised by a question can be referred to the relevant Cabinet member or the appropriate committee to consider.

- Petitions

We welcome petitions from those who live or work in Bury and recognise that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns or the strength of public feeling.

### *What is the scope for petitions?*

Petitions must relate to a matter over which the Council has powers or duties and may be rejected if they: contain language or statements which are defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory, false, or otherwise offensive; disclose confidential or exempt information; name individuals, or provides information where they may be easily identified, e.g. individual officers of public bodies; make criminal accusations; contain advertising statements; refer to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal Council complaint, Local Government Ombudsman complaint or any legal proceedings; or relate to a matter where there are other statutory processes in place for dealing with these matters (such as planning or licensing application matters or statutory petitions for a referendum).

### *How can a petition be submitted?*

Petitions need to be submitted online and an online facility for running a petition is provided on the Council's website. There is no standard format for a petition but it must include:

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish us to take;
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition, which must be not fewer than 50 people; (the Council will use its discretion where there are fewer than 50 signatories in cases where there is clear local support for action)
- contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser who will be the person we will contact to explain how we will respond.

### *What happens once a petition has been submitted?*

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt explaining how we will respond.

Details of all petitions received, and of our response, will be published on the website. The contact details of the petition organiser or signatories to a petition will not be placed on the website.

If your petition has been signed by a certain number of people who are registered to vote in the Borough (currently 2500) then you may request that the petition is scheduled for submission at the next ordinary meeting of the full Council. If that is the case the petition organiser will have up to 5 minutes to briefly present the petition at the meeting.

- What do Councillors and officers do?

### *What Councillors do*

Councillors are directly elected to represent the people and therefore have to consider not just the interests of their ward, but those throughout the whole Borough.

Your Councillors are responsible for making sure that the services that the council provides meet the needs of residents and those who work in Bury. They do this by setting the overall policies and strategies for the Council monitoring the way in which these are implemented. Councillors have a complex role and act in a number of capacities: as committee member, constituency representative and party activist. The full Council of 51 members is responsible for agreeing the main policies and priorities for all services, including the Council's budget. The Cabinet have responsibility for all decisions which the law, or the Council, does not require to be taken by others and agrees policies and actions to implement the budget and policies set by full Council. Councillors who are Cabinet portfolio holders have more specialised roles in agreeing particular policies, representing the Council while at the same time working with other agencies to tackle issues such as improving overall health and wellbeing, social care and safeguarding, education, housing, transport, and promoting economic growth within the borough.

### *What Council officers do*

Council officers are the professional people who work for the Council and who are paid to deliver the services agreed by councillors.

Officers help Councillors to develop policies and objectives through providing professional expertise and advice but they must remain impartial and serve the Council as a whole. Their main role is to provide the public with the highest possible standards of service within the budget that the Councillors set and in accordance with the priorities agreed by the Councillors.

### *What can my Councillor do for me?*

Your Councillor can:

- be contacted to discuss your problem or ideas to improve the ward or borough
  - help you if you need information or are dissatisfied with a Council service by advising or directing you to someone who can help sort out your problem, and can sometimes progress the case on your behalf
  - as a community leader, put forward proposals to improve the ward they represent which may include bringing together different community groups to develop a case for change
  - campaign on local issues
  - represent your community within the Council and to other organisations
  - speak at Planning Control and Licensing and Safety Committees on matters affecting the ward they represent
  - ask questions or put forward views on your behalf at public meetings of the Council
  - present petitions on your behalf (See 5.8.33)
  - get an issue (either within the remit of the Council or on a matter affecting the borough) debated at the full Council by submitting a motion.
- 
- Decisions

### *How do I know what decisions are being taken about matters that affect me or where I live?*

We provide on our website (Forward Plan) summary information about future significant decisions to be taken by the Cabinet, together with contact details so that you can find out more information or provide your views. You can also contact your ward member and ask them to put forward your views on your behalf.

Planning or licensing applications which have been submitted are also published on the Council's website so that those who may be affected are able to make comments on the proposal.

The agendas and minutes of meetings are published on the website, and where a decision has been taken by a Cabinet member or officer, the decision report and notice of the decision are published on the website.

*Are all decisions recorded and published?*

Many are, but there are lots of day to day decisions which are not published. The Council has decided that officer decisions with a financial value of less than £100,000 will not be published unless there is a legal requirement to do so. This is because the number of such decisions would make it impractical to publish.

*Why is some information kept confidential?*

We aim to publish information unless there is good reason not to. Sometimes a decision takes into account information which may be personal to an individual, or which would compromise the commercial position of the council or another individual or organisation. There may be particular legal or employment reasons for not making the information public. When this is the case we will explain why the information cannot be made public, and will periodically review whether those reasons remain valid. If they do not we will then release the information.

*How long is information about decisions kept?*

Generally the law requires information to be available for public inspection for six years from the date of the decision.

*How do I find out about decisions taken by partnerships?*

Bury Council works with a wide range of partners to achieve shared objectives in an efficient and effective way. We keep a register of strategic partnerships on our website which includes information about where decisions taken by those partners is recorded and how you can find out more about them.

*What if I can't find the information I am looking for?*

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives you a general right of access to all types of recorded information that we hold. More information about how to make a request, and about your other legal rights to information, can be found at: [Access to information](#)



- Other ways of getting involved

### *Planning*

Information about planning applications submitted is available on the Council's website and public notices are displayed in the area affected. You may submit comments on a planning application which will be considered by the decision-maker. If the application raises unusual or sensitive planning issues you can ask your ward member to request that the application is considered by the Planning and Control Committee rather than a single officer.

If you have provided comments on a particular planning application which is considered by the Planning and Control committee you will be asked whether you wish to register to speak at the committee to present your views. Three minutes is generally set aside for public speaking in objection/support to an application and registration is on a first come first served basis.

### *Consultations*

The Council encourages as many people as possible to give their views on decisions which affect them. Details of live consultations and how to get involved are available on the Council website at Get Involved. You can also find information about past consultations there.

### *Scrutiny reviews*

You may request that a matter or concern be considered for inclusion in the future work programme of a scrutiny committee. The committees cannot include every suggestion but prioritise items taking into account: the significance and impact of the issue; the ability of scrutiny input to add value; the need to avoid any duplication; the timeliness of scrutiny involvement and the resources available to undertake the work. The committee may invite members of the public to submit their views or evidence to inform its work; when they do this the call for evidence will be publicised.

### *Vote*

Elections take place for Bury Council every year as well as national elections and GM Mayoral elections. Your vote in all these elections and any other referendums that take place is important, but in order to vote you must be on the electoral register. Information about how to register is available on the Council's website.

### *Volunteer*

We provide a wide variety of services to people in Bury, particularly to those who are vulnerable and have complex needs. As more pressure is placed on our budget, and on the budgets of partner organisations, different ways of delivering these services are being developed. Individuals and communities are doing more to help each other and themselves. If you are interested in volunteering or have an idea for your community you would like to develop more information is available at Volunteering.

### *Find out more...*

The Council's website provides lots of advice and information as well as access to online services and you can sign up to receive updates on particular matters of interest.

## Appendix 2 – **DRAFT, Proposed new version**

### Part 5: Section 6 - Public participation guide

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**A healthy democracy depends upon active citizenship. Citizens are encouraged to make conscientious use of their roles as both voters and members of a wider community, and this guide gives an overview of the ways in which you can do that.**

- Attending meetings

We encourage the public to attend all meetings of the Council and its committees, that are held in person or remotely in some circumstances. Members of the public may use social media to report on proceedings at meetings as long as this does not disrupt proceedings, or unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so.

As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer clerking the meeting so that those present are aware.

Details of what meetings are coming up are published on the Council's website.

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk>

Meetings of the Full Council and Cabinet are live-streamed and details of how to view meetings on-line are available on the Council's website.

<https://councilstream.com/burycouncil>

The agenda and papers are normally published on our website at least five working days in advance of the meeting. Draft minutes of the meeting are also published on the website as soon as possible after the meeting.

- Why are some meetings private?

On some occasions an agenda item includes information which may be personal to an individual, which would compromise the commercial position of the Council or another individual or organisation or which there are other particular legal or employment reasons for asking the public to leave the meeting for discussion of that item. When this is the case, we will explain the reasons why and, as far as is legally possible, will afterwards provide a public summary of the decision taken.

- Asking questions at meetings of the Council

*Which meetings can the public ask questions at?*

Questions can be asked at public meetings of:

- The Full Council

- Cabinet
- Health and Wellbeing board
- Licensing and Safety Committee
- Scrutiny Committees
- Locality Board Bury Bee Local Network Forum

A period of up to 30 minutes, will be allocated for questions and supplementary questions. This period may be varied at the discretion of the Chair.

*Who can ask questions?*

Questions can be put by anyone living, working or studying in Bury.

*What notice is required for questions?*

A question must be delivered by email ([democraticservices@bury.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@bury.gov.uk)) by no later than Midday two working days before the date of the meeting. Each question must provide the name and residential/business address of the questioner (although only the name and town will be published).

*How many questions can be asked?*

A member of the public may ask one\* question at any public meeting of the Council as listed above. (\*=See below for supplementary questions)

*What is the scope for questions?*

Questions should relate to the function of the committee where they are being asked. A question at the full Council can be addressed to any Chair or Cabinet Member and must relate either to something that the Council is responsible for or that affects the Borough.

We will not consider any question that is:-

- In multiple parts
- Not about a matter for which the Council has responsibility for or which affects Bury,
- Is defamatory, offensive or frivolous,
- Substantially the same as one submitted in the previous six months which has been put at a meeting of the Council\*,
- Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information
- From a Council employee and is related to their employment,
- Relates to a Planning or Licencing Application or appeal against a committee decision.
- Is submitted by a publicly declared candidate for election during the pre-election period.

*What happens at the meeting?*

Time is made available early on the agenda for any accepted questions to be dealt with. Copies of any questions and available answers will be published on the Council's website before the start of the meeting, and will be made available to members of the public who attend the meeting.

You will be asked to confirm your attendance at the meeting to present your question.

If you are not able to attend the meeting the question will not be dealt with at the meeting and a written response will be provided.

A questioner who has put a question in person can also ask one supplementary question, without notice, in response to the reply to their question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply given. The chair can reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds detailed in the section above. The Chair will invite the questioner to put a supplementary question to the Councillor named in the notice.

*What form will the reply take?*

The answer may be either a direct oral answer, a referral to an existing publication, or if the question requests service information a referral to an officer to respond in writing. If the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, if the questioner or the member to whom the question is put is absent, or the time allowed for public questions has expired, a written answer will normally be provided within ten working days.

There cannot be any discussion on questions but any matters raised by a question can be referred to the relevant Cabinet member or the appropriate committee to considered.

## Consultation and Engagement

Consultation is a conversation that leads to a decision where the views of a community should be taken into account. Decision makers must ensure they have taken into account all views and information before reaching a decision in particular around statutory purposes.

‘Engagement’ is a term that is frequently used within local government and relates to the dialogue the council and its partners has with its resident and communities.

Effective engagement needs a tailored method which builds on our relationships with residents and other stakeholders across our partnerships. As we know from the work through our Neighbourhood Teams, our communities all work differently and will prefer to engage with us using different methods. Sometimes it may be appropriate just to inform our residents and communities about local issues or challenges the public sector faces through routine communication channels, while at other times we will seek to consult and involve residents and communities in much greater depth for both local and statutory reasons.

Bury’s LET’s Do It! Approach sets out the commitment to inclusive dialogue with communities to shape and priorities, This includes at a neighbourhood level through the work of Public Service Leadership Teams, community Partners & Communities Together [PACT] meetings, including the attendance of Council and partner agencies at community settings, meetings and network. Similarly, this takes place from thematic perspectives, for example through Circles of Influence which engages young people in the Borough and participation opportunities in place-shaping of regeneration schemes.

In general engagement with residents and other key stakeholders does not end with a decision being taken; there may often continue to be a need for ongoing engagement to ensure policy decisions are effectively implemented.

Consultation is used to give local people a voice in our decision making and an opportunity to influence. It also provides the Council with an opportunity to listen and learn from local people before decisions and priorities are set. For the Council in addition there are legal implications if a consultation is not run for something that is deemed statutory. In general consultation is a good thing to do to encourage residents participation, understand resident satisfaction and shape activities around residents needs.

The Council utilise a Consultation Checklist to support officers when undertaking consultations. This provides guidance around statutory requirements and best practice methodology.

The Council encourages as many people as possible to give their views on decisions which affect them through appropriate consultation. Details of live consultations and how to get involved are available on the Council website at <https://www.bury.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations> . You can also find information about past consultations there.

## Communications and marketing

We want everyone in Bury to feel informed, involved and able to have their say. We have an overarching communications strategy that sets out this aim as well as our principles, channels (or methods) of communications and clear objectives to create the right conversations to help us achieve priorities. This section is intended to give a short overview of the parts of the communications strategy that identify our channels and how anyone in the borough should be able to use them to help them participate in, and contribute to, our shared success for the borough. Our communications are guided by the principles of being clear, accurate, timely, accessible and, where possible, two-way. That means we use a mix of channels so you can choose what works best for you:

- **Council website** – the main hub for news, service updates, meeting agendas and consultation details.
- **Social media** – follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X for updates, videos and opportunities to find out about our work, comment and share your views.
- **Local media** – we work with newspapers, radio and TV to keep you informed about decisions and events.
- **Community networks** – including faith forums, ward councillors, and local groups where we share information and listen to feedback.
- **Email and direct mail** – sign up to our newsletters and get important updates straight to your inbox or home.
- **Face-to-face engagement** – from public meetings and consultations to community events and focus groups.
- **Out-of-home advertising** – messages on billboards, bus stops and other public spaces to reach people across the borough.
- **Video and storytelling** – short videos and case studies showing how council decisions make a difference in real lives.

We aim to make every interaction simple, inclusive and meaningful, so you can help shape the future of Bury.

Our approach to communication is always evolving. The channels we use today may change as technology and audience preferences shift, so this section gives a high-level overview rather than listing every platform. Social media platforms, for example, are constantly changing in effectiveness and some even cease to exist, and we will adapt to ensure we continue to reach people in the best way possible.

These channels are often intended to echo, amplify and signpost people to the other

methods of participation identified in this guidance. We may promote our formal public meetings and committees, run campaigns to promote voter registration and remind people of upcoming elections, and we may explain consultations in simple ways to draw people to respond in full.

However, it is important to remember that, where some of these corporate communications methods provide a good place to provide us with insight and views to continuously improve our services, channels such as social media are not a substitute for, example, voting in elections or submitting a formal response to a consultation.



- Petitions

We welcome petitions from those who live or work in Bury and recognise that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns or the strength of public feeling.

### *What is the scope for petitions?*

Petitions must relate to a matter over which the Council has powers or duties and may be rejected if they: contain language or statements which are defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory, false, or otherwise offensive; disclose confidential or exempt information; name individuals, or provides information where they may be easily identified, e.g. individual officers of public bodies; make criminal accusations; contain advertising statements; refer to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal Council complaint, Local Government Ombudsman complaint or any legal proceedings; or relate to a matter where there are other statutory processes in place for dealing with these matters (such as planning or licensing application matters or statutory petitions for a referendum).

### *How can a petition be submitted?*

Petitions need to be submitted online and an online facility for running a petition is provided on the Council's website. There is no standard format for a petition but it must include:

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish us to take;
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition, which must be not fewer than 50 people; (the Council will use its discretion where there are fewer than 50 signatories in cases where there is clear local support for action)
- contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser who will be the person we will contact to explain how we will respond.

### *What happens once a petition has been submitted?*

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt explaining how we will respond.

Details of all petitions received, and of our response, will be published on the website. The contact details of the petition organiser or signatories to a petition will not be placed on the website.

If your petition has been signed by a certain number of people who are registered to vote in the Borough (currently 2500) then you may request that the petition is scheduled for submission at the next ordinary meeting of the full Council. If that is the case the petition organiser will have up to 5 minutes to briefly present the petition at the meeting.

- What do Councillors and officers do?

#### *What Councillors do*

Councillors are directly elected to represent the people and therefore have to consider not just the interests of their ward, but those throughout the whole Borough.

Your Councillors are responsible for making sure that the services that the council provides meet the needs of residents and those who work in Bury. They do this by setting the overall policies and strategies for the Council monitoring the way in which these are implemented. Councillors have a complex role and act in a number of capacities: as committee member, constituency representative and party activist.

The full Council of 51 members is responsible for agreeing the main policies and priorities for all services, including the Council's budget. The Cabinet have responsibility for all decisions which the law, or the Council, does not require to be taken by others and agrees policies and actions to implement the budget and policies set by full Council. Councillors who are Cabinet portfolio holders have more specialised roles in agreeing particular policies, representing the Council while at the same time working with other agencies to tackle issues such as improving overall health and wellbeing, social care and safeguarding, education, housing, transport, and promoting economic growth within the Borough.

#### *What Council officers do*

Council officers are the people who work for the Council and who are paid to deliver the services agreed by Councillors.

Officers help Councillors to develop policies and objectives through providing professional expertise and advice but they must remain impartial and serve the Council as a whole. Their main role is to provide the public with the highest possible standards of service within the budget that the Councillors set and in accordance with the priorities agreed by the Councillors.

#### *What can my Councillor do for me?*

Your Councillor can:

- be contacted to discuss your problem or ideas to improve the ward or borough
- help you if you need information or are dissatisfied with a Council service by advising or directing you to someone who can help sort out your problem, and can sometimes progress the case on your behalf
- as a community leader, put forward proposals to improve the ward they represent which may include bringing together different community groups to develop a case for change

- campaign on local issues
  - represent your community within the Council and to other organisations
  - speak at Planning Control and Licensing and Safety Committees on matters affecting the ward they represent
  - ask questions or put forward views on your behalf at public meetings of the Council
  - present petitions on your behalf
  - get an issue (either within the remit of the Council or on a matter affecting the borough) debated at the full Council by submitting a motion.
- 
- Decisions

*How do I know what decisions are being taken about matters that affect me or where I live?*

We provide on our website (Forward Plan) summary information about future significant decisions to be taken by the Cabinet, together with contact details so that you can find out more information or provide your views. You can also contact your ward member and ask them to put forward your views on your behalf.

Planning or licensing applications which have been submitted are also published on the Council's website so that those who may be affected are able to make comments on the proposal.

The agendas and minutes of meetings are published on the website, and where a decision has been taken by a Cabinet member or officer, the decision report and notice of the decision are published on the website.

*Are all decisions recorded and published?*

Many are, but there are lots of day to day decisions which are not published. The Council has decided that officer decisions with a financial value of less than £100,000 will not be published unless there is a legal requirement to do so. This is because the number of such decisions would make it impractical to publish.

*Why is some information kept confidential?*

We aim to publish information unless there is good reason not to. Sometimes a decision takes into account information which may be personal to an individual, or which would compromise the commercial position of the council or another individual or organisation. There may be particular legal or employment reasons for not making the information public. When this is the case we will explain why the information cannot be made public, and will periodically review whether those reasons remain valid. If they do not we will then release the information.

*How long is information about decisions kept?*

Generally the law requires information to be available for public

inspection for six years from the date of the decision.

*How do I find out about decisions taken by partnerships?*

Bury Council works with a wide range of partners to achieve shared objectives in an efficient and effective way. We keep a register of strategic partnerships on our website which includes information about where decisions taken by those partners is recorded and how you can find out more about them.

*What if I can't find the information I am looking for?*

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives you a general right of access to all types of recorded information that we hold. More information about how to make a request, and about your other legal rights to information, can be found at: Access to information

[Freedom of Information request - Bury Council](#)

- Other ways of getting involved

### *Planning*

Information about planning applications submitted is available on the Council's website and public notices are displayed in the area affected. You may submit comments on a planning application which will be considered by the decision-maker. If the application raises unusual or sensitive planning issues you can ask your ward member to request that the application is considered by the Planning and Control Committee rather than a single officer.

If you have provided comments on a particular planning application which is considered by the Planning and Control committee you will be asked whether you wish to register to speak at the committee to present your views. Three minutes is generally set aside for public speaking in objection/support to an application and registration is on a first come first served basis.

### *Scrutiny reviews*

You may request that a matter or concern be considered for inclusion in the future work programme of a scrutiny committee. The committees cannot include every suggestion but prioritise items taking into account: the significance and impact of the issue; the ability of scrutiny input to add value; the need to avoid any duplication; the timeliness of scrutiny involvement and the resources available to undertake the work.

The committee may invite members of the public to submit their views or evidence to inform its work; when they do this the call for evidence will be publicised.

### *Vote*

Elections take place for Bury Council for a third of the Council each year, with no elections scheduled to be held on the fourth year of the cycle, as well as national elections and GM Mayoral elections. Your vote in all these elections and any other referendums that take place is important, but in order to vote you must be on the electoral register. Information about how to register is available on the Council's website.

### *Volunteer*

We provide a wide variety of services to people in Bury, particularly to those who are vulnerable and have complex needs. As more pressure is placed on our budget, and on the budgets of partner organisations, different ways of

delivering these services are being developed. Individuals and communities are doing more to help each other and themselves. If you are interested in volunteering or have an idea for your community you would like to develop more information is available at Volunteering.

[www.buryvcfa.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.buryvcfa.org.uk/volunteering) or call 0161 518 5550

*Find out more...*

The Council's website provides lots of advice and information as well as access to online services and you can sign up to receive updates on particular matters of interest:

<https://www.bury.gov.uk/>

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