

Minutes of: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 12th February 2026

Present: Councillor N Bayley (in the Chair)
 Councillors R Bernstein, S Arif, A Booth, R Gold, M Hayes, D Quinn,
 T Rafiq and M Rahimov

Also in attendance: J. Dennis, Director of Law and Governance.
 M. Cunliffe, Democratic Services.

 Independent Person: Mr S. Birtwell

Public Attendance: No members of the public or press were present at the meeting.

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors J Hook, D Vernon and Independent Person, Mr Craig Ainsworth.
Councillor R. Bernstein acted as a substitute representative for Councillor Vernon.

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 26th November 2025 were approved as a correct record.

4 6 MONTH MEMBER ATTENDANCE UPDATE

The Standards Committee received a report which provided an overview on Councillor attendance covering the last 6 months (1st August 2025- 31st January 2026) at public meetings for the current municipal year 2025-2026. There was a change in report style presented to the Standards Committee as previously the information covered all meetings from the beginning of the municipal year (May 2025) and provided a full snapshot of attendance data generated from a spreadsheet.

A full attendance report can be generated by the committee management system managed by Democratic Services and all the attendance data could be viewed in an excel spreadsheet. This had been previously presented to Standards Committee but was deemed not required given the amount of data and layout of the information.

Following feedback, previous Standards meetings had seen the 6-month report detailing a summary of the total expected attendance figures along with being present, absent and including apologies at meetings.

With no issues highlighted over the past couple of years in terms of Member attendance, going forward, the 6-month update would only be produced for the Standards Committee as an exceptions report to raise any issues of Members with low attendance or if they have not attended a meeting in some time and could be approaching a 6-month period of non-attendance.

Upon viewing the recent statistics, the data does not warrant any Members attendance falling into the above criteria and being scrutinised by the Standards Committee over the past 6 months. The Committee would act as a fail-safe if attendance was particularly low and in the case of the 6-month rule, an exemption to Full Council could be discussed giving the reasons behind it.

Another fail-safe was that this matter could be discussed with group leaders about their group Members at the Democratic Arrangement Forum meetings.

If Members or the public wish to examine Councillor attendance data in full detail, then this can still be conducted by viewing the Council's website and viewing the attendance record tab on each individual Members webpage with the data in the public domain.

Members discussed some of the classifications for recording criteria which is listed online and another point to note was that Members do also attend ward meetings and surgeries in their own townships and at meetings across Greater Manchester (GMCA), but that data is not recorded. Hence an additional piece of information would also be added to the Councillors section on the website to explain not all attendance at meetings was recorded.

The independent Members welcomed the approach that in the future only an exceptions report would be produced to highlight any issues.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

5 OFFICER & MEMBER PROTOCOL

The Director of Law and Governance, Jacqui Dennis reported that the Officer Code of Conduct formed part of the 2025-2026 constitution annual review plan and was also included on the Standards Committee work programme for this Municipal year. The code defines the standards of behaviour expected from all staff at Bury Council and its primary objective was to promote transparency, accountability and the prudent use of public resources. To remain effective, the code should be subject to periodic review and any revisions.

Members were asked to consider the current constitution, Part 5 The Codes and Conduct and Section 3, Protocol on Member and Officer relations.

Attached to the agenda pack was an updated draft Officer and Member Protocol.

The Protocol presents clear expectations for how elected Members and Officers work together in the public interest. It promoted mutual respect, impartiality and effective decision making, and provided practical rules for day-to-day interactions, including hybrid and digital working, media handling, safeguarding, equality, and the pre-election ("purdah") period.

Once the Committee have agreed a final version, the protocol would go to full Council for approval before the constitution is amended and a review for this item would take place every two years.

Members commented that equality was important and that Officers inform Members of developments taking place in their wards as listed under 6.4 of the guidance. There was also a need not to overstep the mark during informal meetings between each other in terms of personal, private and professional relationships.

Independent Member, Mr Stuart Birtwell commented that some items of the model code didn't apply to the Council and the Director of Law and Governance stated that the model code had been adapted with improvements such as bullying being included as per the ACAS definition.

The Director of Law and Governance also reported she had received comments on this agenda item from the other Independent Member, Mr Craig Ainsworth who was unable to attend this meeting.

Members welcomed the protocol and the review period of every 2 years was deemed appropriate.

The Director of Law and Governance was happy to assist with reporting and escalation matters and details of the Hub and relevant contacts would be added to the list included at 7.3 of the protocol.

It was agreed:-

That the report be noted and Members would review the draft protocol and provide any additional comments to the Director Law & Governance.

6 URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business was reported.

7 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

At this point of the Meeting, the Panel moved into Part B, having resolved under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and be public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item of business since it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as stated.

8 COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS

The Director Law & Governance provided a verbal report to the Committee on Councillor complaints and provided details of the numbers received and some of the nature of these complaints.

The Committee were informed that one incident could lead to a number of complaints and to date no hearings had been required.

Members discussed the information provided and asked a number of relevant questions on the subject matter.

It was agreed:

That the update be noted.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Standards Committee meeting was provisionally scheduled to take place in June 2026 subject to the timetable of meetings for the 2026-2027 municipal year being approved at full Council in March.

The Director Law & Governance thanked the Chair, Councillor Noel Bayley for hosting the meeting during his Mayoral year. She also thanked all Members of the committee including the

independent persons for their continued support and constructive comments during the past 12 months.

COUNCILLOR N BAYLEY
Chair

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