

**AGENDA FOR  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**



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**To: All Members of Standards Committee**

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

**Independent Persons:** C Ainsworth and S Birtwell

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>	Thursday, 12 February 2026
<b>Place:</b>	Committee Rooms A & 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 6 MONTH MEMBER ATTENDANCE UPDATE** (*Pages 7 - 10*)

### **5 OFFICER & MEMBER PROTOCOL** (*Pages 11 - 18*)

### **6 URGENT BUSINESS**

### **7 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider passing the appropriate resolution under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business since they involve the likely disclosure of the exempt information.

Description of Exempt Information by reference to Paragraph Number in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:-

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

### **8 COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS**

To consider a verbal update by the Director of Law & Governance on complaints against Members.

### **9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The timetable of meetings for 2026-2027 is subject to confirmation at Full Council in March. Provisional dates for future Standards Committee meetings during the forthcoming municipal year have been included in the timetable for June 26, September 26, December 26 and March 27. These dates will be communicated online and to e-diaries once approved.

<b>Minutes of:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
<b>Present:</b>	Councillor N Bayley (in the Chair) Councillors A Booth, R Gold, M Hayes, J Hook, D Quinn, T Rafiq, M Rahimov, D Vernon and S Arif
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services Chloe Ashworth, Assistant Democratic Service Manager Rachel Everitt, Elections and Land Charges Manager  Independent Persons: Craig Ainsworth and Stuart Birtwell
<b>Public Attendance:</b>	No members of the public were present at the meeting.

## 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and there were no apologies.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

## 3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & ANY MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025 were agreed as a correct and accurate record.

The following matter arising were picked up in the meeting:

Jacqui Dennis, Monitoring Officer gave members an overview of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2024-25 which stated that financial redress was detailed in 8 of the cases for 2024-2025.

## 4 MEMBER ATTENDANCE STATISTICS

Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services presented the Member Attendance Statistics for information. Following the presentation of the report members discussed the following points:

Cllr Hayes queried the difference between 'Apologies' and 'Absent including apologies'. Member were informed that 'Absent including apologies' includes meetings where apologies were sent and those where they were not, meaning apologies appear twice, which could be misleading.

Members discussed improving the report format and communication. Members noted that attendance data for statutory meetings is already published on the Council website.

Members agreed that the report should be amended and re considered at the next meeting. This should include a short Excel log of attendance and the covering report should be revised to clarify:

1. Only statutory meetings are logged.
2. Excludes non-statutory meetings such as:
  - Recruitment & Disciplinary Panels (HR Panel)

- Licensing Sub-Committees
- GMCA meetings
- External partner meetings
- Community events, ceremonial/mayoral events
- Briefings or training sessions
- Outside bodies

Comments from Members varied with there being no unanimous decision on the whether the report should cover all members, only those who exceed the 70% threshold, report only by exception. Therefore members decided that an alternative format should be presented to a future meeting for consideration.

It was agreed that:

- The report format should be reviewed
- Officers should add an Excel log for clarity.
- The report should include an explanatory covering note.
- Consider exception reporting for members below attendance threshold (70–75%).
- Explore adding GMCA link and references to subcommittees.
- Ensure website reflects snapshot data with clear caveats.

## **5 STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND**

The Committee received an update from Jacqui Dennis, Monitoring Officer on the Government's proposals following the consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities.

Key changes include:

- Introduction of a mandatory national code of conduct.
  - Requirement for all principal authorities to establish a standards committee with independent chairing and voting rights for co-opted members.
  - New sanctions, including suspension (up to 6 months), withholding allowances, and premises bans.
  - Provision for interim suspension in serious cases.
  - Mandatory publication of investigation outcomes, including exonerations.
  - Creation of a national appeals body and statutory review rights.
  - Disqualification for repeated serious breaches.
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- The Committee noted that the proposals presented issues in relation to the six-month suspension period and will have knock on effects for the six-month rule for member attendance.

It was agreed:

- That the update be noted.
  - That the Monitoring Officer ensures regular progress updates are provided to the Committee.
1. Members of the Committee unanimously agreed that this information and report should be circulated to all Bury Council Elected Members following the meeting.

## 6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDANCE

The Committee considered the draft Public Participation Guidance along side the original version which set out how residents can engage with the Council and its decision-making processes.

Key points in the documentation were presented as follows:

- **Attending Meetings:** The public are encouraged to attend Council and committee meetings in person or online. Guidance has been provided on filming, social media use, and accessing agendas and minutes.
- **Public Questions:** Residents, workers, and students in Bury may submit questions for specified meetings with two working days' notice. Rules on scope, supplementary questions, and responses were outlined.
- **Consultation & Engagement:** Emphasis on inclusive dialogue through Bury's *Let's Do It!* approach, neighbourhood teams, thematic engagement and statutory consultations.
- **Communications Channels:** Overview of Council website, social media, local media, newsletters, and community networks to ensure residents are informed and involved.
- **Petitions:** Process for submitting petitions online, minimum signatories, and conditions for presentation at Full Council were outlined.
- **Roles & Responsibilities:** Explanation of Councillors' and officers' roles, decision-making transparency, and access to information including FOI rights.

**A member highlighted that Youth Parliament should be included within the guidance.**

Councillor Booth raised concerns about public participation guidance on attending meetings and referenced the issue for parents who have a child with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities who may be unable to attend meetings and streaming of the meeting is now not conducted. Members were informed officers are aware of this however the current Chair has made allowances for flexibility in how people attend or voice their questions and a scoping exercise based on usage and cost of streaming services was undertaken and it evidenced streaming certain meetings was not viable. Copies of minutes, agendas and questions are published on the Council's website.

Members sought assurances that the Council will enforce the rule stating that the same question cannot be asked within a 12-month period. They also asked whether this will be clearly communicated to individuals who have previously submitted questions, in order to prevent multiple or repeat questions. In addition, a member raised the need to include clear guidance on question rules, specifically relating to licensing matters at the Committee.

Councillor Hayes highlighted that page 53 mentions elections every year which needs updating to reflect the fallow year.

It was agreed:

- That the draft Public Participation Guidance be noted.
- That the final version be scheduled for approval at a future Council meeting.

## 7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

A revised member attendance statistics report to be brought to this meeting in an alternative format.

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

**(Note: The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.15 pm)**



<b>Classification</b>	<b>Item No. 4</b>
<b>Open / Closed</b>	

<b>Meeting:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Meeting date:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<b>Title of report:</b>	6 Month Member Attendance Update
<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 provides an overview on Councillor attendance covering the last 6 months (1<sup>st</sup> August 2025- 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026) at public meetings for the current municipal year 2025-2026. There is 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.

Going forward, the 6-month update will only be produced as an exceptions report to raise any issues of Members with low attendance (under 30%) or if they have not attended a meeting in some time and could be approaching a 6-month period of non-attendance.

Therefore, no data is accompanying this report as upon viewing the 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 will 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.

The information draws from public facing meetings and attendance summaries for other meetings which can include private meetings where the public are exempt.

A full attendance report is generated by the committee management system managed by Democratic Services and all the attendance data can 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 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.

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.

Some Councillors attend a lot more meetings than other Members, for example if they sit on Employment Panels or Licensing Hearing Sub Committees which can be held many times throughout the course of a year.

Another point to consider is that Members do also attend ward meetings and surgeries in their own townships and at meetings across Greater Manchester (GMCA) but this data is not recorded by Democratic Services on the Committee Management system as some agendas and meetings are not managed by the department or available for the public to attend.

These can include:-

- External partner meetings
- Community events, ceremonial/mayoral events
- Briefings or training sessions
- Outside bodies

An additional piece of information will also be added to the Councillors section on the website to explain the above attendance at meetings not being recorded.

### **Recommendation(s)**

That the Councillor attendance update at meetings during the last 6 months be noted with no issues to report.

To view the attendance statistics online, visit

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

Input the date range you wish to view and an explanation of the statistics columns are detailed below:-

- Expected - The number of meetings that the councillor is expected to attend 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.
- Present, as substitute  
The number of meetings that a councillor attended y in place of a committee member who could not attend.
- In attendance - The number of meetings that a 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 in advance, at the meeting or afterwards.

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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:**

*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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<b>Classification</b>	<b>Item No. 5</b>
<b>Open / Closed</b>	

<b>Meeting:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Meeting date:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<b>Title of report:</b>	Officer & Member Protocol
<b>Report by:</b>	Jacqui Dennis, Director Law & Governance
<b>Decision Type:</b>	For comment
<b>Ward(s) to which report relates</b>	N/A

### Executive Summary:

As part of the 2025-2026 constitution annual review plan and also included on the Standards Committee work programme for this Municipal year. The Officer Code of Conduct defines the standards of behaviour expected from all staff at Bury Council. Its primary objective is 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 are asked to consider the current constitution, Part 5 The Codes and Conduct, Section 3, Protocol on Member and Officer relations.

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s45700/Section%203%20-%20Protocol%20on%20Member%20and%20Officer%20Relations.pdf>

Attached as appendix 1 to the agenda pack is the draft updated Officer and Member Protocol.

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

Once Standards 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.

**Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to review the draft protocol and provide their thoughts at the Standards Committee meeting or submit their comments to the Director Law & Governance.

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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:**

The Council's Constitution  
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=350&MId=4110&Ver=4&Info=1>

## Officer & Member protocol

### 1) Purpose and Legal Framework

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

This Protocol reflects:

- LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct and related guidance on conduct, civility and complaint handling.
- Publicity and pre-election period rules for local authorities (LGA guidance; House of Commons Library briefing).
- Safeguarding: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023); Care Act 2014 safeguarding duties for adults.
- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), including EHRC guidance and specific duties regulations.
- Member–Officer Relations Good Practice Guidance (LGA).

This Protocol should be read alongside the Constitution, Codes of Conduct (Members and Officers), Information Governance policies, Whistleblowing, Social Media and Communications policies, and Safeguarding and Equality policies.

### 2) Principles and Standards of Conduct

The following standards apply to all Member–Officer interactions:

1. Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership (Nolan Principles) and Civility/Respect as reflected in the LGA Model Code.
2. Mutual respect and trust, with clarity of roles and visible leadership—core features of effective relations per LGA good practice guidance.
3. Impartial, evidence-based advice by Officers; constructive challenge by Members; and transparency in decision making.
4. Equality, diversity and inclusion embedded in conduct and decisions, in line with the Equality Act 2010/PSED.
5. Safeguarding first: a shared responsibility to act on concerns about children and adults at risk.

### 3) Roles and Responsibilities

#### 3.1 Members

- Set policy and budget; represent residents; scrutinise; and champion equality, safeguarding and good governance. Conduct is governed by the locally adopted Code consistent with the LGA Model Code.
- Work through formal decision-making structures and with Officers for advice and implementation (see Section 6).

#### 3.2 Officers

- Provide impartial, professional advice and implement lawful decisions of Council/Cabinet/Committees, maintaining political neutrality.
- Ensure timely, accurate information and escalate risks (legal, financial, safeguarding, equality).

### 3.3 Statutory Officers

- Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive): overall corporate management.
- Monitoring Officer: lawfulness, ethics, code of conduct and constitutional advice; manages standards complaints processes consistent with LGA guidance.
- Chief Finance Officer (s151): financial propriety and prudence.

### 4) Behavioural Expectations

1. Respect and Civility: No bullying, harassment, intimidation, discriminatory language or behaviour. Persistent or vexatious conduct, including online, is prohibited under the LGA Model Code.
2. Equality and Inclusion: Members and Officers must have due regard to the PSED when shaping or delivering services, publishing information and setting equality objectives as required by law.
3. Impartiality: Members must not seek to compromise Officers' impartial advice; Officers must not be drawn into political activities.
4. Boundaries: Avoid personal familiarity that could create actual or perceived conflicts; disclose any close relationships that could affect impartiality.

### 5) Communication and Collaboration Protocols (including Digital/Hybrid)

#### 5.1 General Standards

- Communicate courteously and clearly; respond within agreed service standards.
- Use official @bury.gov.uk channels and council approved platforms (e.g., Teams) for council business to meet security, records and FOI duties.
- Do not share confidential or personal data via personal email, or unapproved channels.

The LGA's good practice stresses clarity of roles, professional boundaries, and the importance of agreed expectations for effective relations—principles that extend to digital collaboration.

#### 5.2 Instant Messaging & WhatsApp style Tools

Do:

- Use approved platforms (Teams/SharePoint) and council email for business; keep records.
- Be courteous, concise, and inclusive; avoid jargon.
- Ensure that where necessary discussions are recorded and action points noted where follow up actions are needed.

Don't:

- Use private emails/direct messaging for confidential council business.
- Circulate personal data casually or outside the "need to know."
- Allow WhatsApp or similar to become a decision forum.

### 5.3 Remote/Hybrid Meetings

- Apply the same decorum and standards as in person meetings; ensure confidentiality and avoid distractions.
- Respect chairing arrangements and officer advice; ensure accessibility and inclusion.

### 5.4 Information Governance

- Share only the minimum necessary information; apply classification and encryption where required.
- Report any data incidents immediately, by contacting the Council Data Protection Officer.

## 6) Decision Making and Governance Relationships

### 6.1 Cabinet and Officers

- Cabinet Members decide within the Constitution; they must take documented, professional advice (including MO and s151) before decisions are made.

### 6.2 Overview & Scrutiny and Officers

- Scrutiny may require Officer attendance and information. Questioning must be respectful; scrutiny focuses on policy and performance, not personal capability.

### 6.3 Committees, Sub Committees and Delegations

- Where committees delegate action “in consultation with the Chair,” the Officer remains the decision maker and is accountable for the action. (Chair cannot direct officers outside formal powers.)

### 6.4 Ward Work and Local Issues

- Officers should keep relevant ward Members informed on significant matters, consultation and sensitive operations, subject to confidentiality and legal constraints.

## 7) Safeguarding Responsibilities (Children and Adults)

### 7.1 Our Shared Duty

- All Members and Officers must recognise and act on concerns about children or adults at risk, following “Working Together” (children) and Care Act (adults) statutory frameworks.

### 7.2 Principles

- Child centred, whole family approach; strong multi agency working; timely referrals; accurate recording; and escalation when necessary.
- Adults: Section 42 enquiries where an adult has needs for care and support, is experiencing (or at risk of) abuse/neglect, and cannot protect themselves; proportionate, person centred and timely responses.

### 7.3 Reporting and Escalation

Immediate risk: dial 999.

- Children's concerns: [Bury Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub –].
- Adults' concerns: [Bury Adult Social Care Safeguarding –].
- Duty to share information lawfully when necessary to protect a child or adult at risk; record decisions and rationale.
- Children: Follow Working Together—report to [Bury MASH] if you suspect abuse/neglect; record concerns; escalate if necessary.
- Adults: Consider Care Act s.42 criteria; report to [Adult Safeguarding Team]; keep the person's wishes central; record and escalate.
- Emergency: Call 999. Non-emergency police: 101.
- Training & Contacts:

## 8) Pre Election (Purdah) and Publicity

### 8.1 Restrictions

During the pre-election period, specific restrictions apply to publicity, use of council resources, new policy announcements, events and communications. Local authorities must avoid activity that could be reasonably regarded as influencing voters.

### 8.2 What This Means in Practice

- No political publicity or material referencing candidates/parties in council communications; use neutral officer spokespeople for factual statements.
- Apply the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011) and Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986—take special care during “heightened sensitivity.”
- If in doubt, consult the Monitoring Officer for guidance.

### Key Restrictions and Examples

- No launch of new, contentious initiatives; no political comment in council channels.
- No photos/videos of candidates in council issued content, no supply of council images to campaigns.
- Consider pausing campaigns that touch politically controversial topics; continue only neutral, necessary business (e.g., statutory notices).
- All staff and Members: apply the “reasonable person” test—could this be seen as influencing voters? If yes, stop and seek advice

## 9) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

### 9.1 Legal Duties

- Under Equality Act 2010 s.149 (PSED), Bury Council must have due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. Specific duties require publishing equality information and setting measurable objectives.

## 9.2 Practical Expectations

- Build EDI into reports, appraisals, consultations, commissioning and service design; use proportionate equality analysis and track impacts.
- Model inclusive behaviour in all interactions (meetings, correspondence, online).
- Align with Bury's equalities and diversity training

## 10) Boundary Management and Conflicts

- Members do not direct individual Officers (outside formal decisions) or attempt to influence recruitment, procurement or casework outcomes.
- Officers do not provide party political advice or participate in political activity restricted by role.
- Declare and manage conflicts of interest; seek Monitoring Officer advice where necessary.

## 11) Use of Council Resources

- Resources (staff time, equipment, facilities, email, social media) must be used only for council business and not for party political purposes, with particular care in the pre-election period under the Publicity Code.
- Do not request or pressure Officers to undertake tasks outside policy or law (e.g., campaign support, partisan events).

## 12) Media and Public Communications

- Officers issue factual, neutral communications on council policies/services; Members may speak as portfolio holders or ward Members, being clear in what capacity they are speaking.
- For sensitive topics or live incidents, route through Communications Team; maintain a single, authoritative voice.
- During the pre-election period, apply Section 8 (above) rigorously.

## 13) Concerns, Complaints and Breaches

### 13.1 Informal Resolution

- Raise concerns directly and constructively with the individual where appropriate; seek manager and Monitoring Officer support if needed.

### 13.2 Formal Processes

- Members: Alleged breaches of the Member Code are handled under the standards arrangements led by the Monitoring Officer and dealt with in accordance with the code of conduct complaints handling procedures.
- Officers: Alleged breaches are handled under HR/disciplinary procedures.
- Whistleblowing: Protected disclosures via Council policy.

Review: Every 2 years (next review date due: May 2028)

Supersedes: Section 3 – Protocol on Member and Officer Relations (review date May 2023)

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