

Minutes of: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 26th November 2025

Present: 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

Also in attendance: 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

Public Attendance: 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 16th 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 12th 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)