

Minutes of: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 23rd June 2026

Present: Councillor T Rafiq (in the Chair)
Councillors S Arif, M Hayes, D Hill, J Hook, D Quinn,
M Rahimov, M Smith and S Thorpe

Also in attendance: J. Dennis, Director of Law and Governance.
M. Cunliffe, Democratic Services.
Independent Persons: Mr S. Birtwell and Mr C. Ainsworth

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

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

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 12th February 2026 were approved as a correct record.

4 STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The 2026-2027 terms of reference for the Standards Committee were attached to the agenda for reference purposes as this was the first meeting of the Committee for the municipal year.

The Director of Law and Governance, Jacqui Dennis added that there were two independent Members at present but three could be in position.

It was agreed:

That the terms of reference be noted.

5 STANDARDS COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2027

The 2026-2027 draft work programme for the Standards Committee was attached to the agenda for reference purposes ahead of the forthcoming municipal year of meetings.

The Director Law & Governance provided a brief overview on items listed for future meetings.

The Independent Member, Craig Ainsworth commented on Member complaints and the process for dealing with these and investigating if training had been undertaken. The Director Law & Governance stated that core mandatory training was required for Members of Planning and Licensing Committees with the Member Development Group covering training requirements.

A Member enquired if feedback from the Member Development Group could be given on the mandatory training requirements and other topics provided for Members along with any attendance data and the process for following up those that don't attend the sessions provided.

The December 2026 meeting had not had any items allocated as there may be topics which arise over the coming months which are appropriate to be listed on the last agenda of the year.

The Member Complaints update had been omitted in error from the March 2027 meeting and this would be included on the work programme.

It was agreed:-

That the items on the draft work programme be approved and an update on the Member Development offer be provided to the next meeting.

6

NATIONAL CASE UPDATE

The Director Law & Governance provided an update report on recent standards cases and developments from other local authorities, as reported in the press and sector publications.

The report highlighted key themes nationally emerging from recent findings and identified any learning points relevant to the Council.

Recent national reporting confirms that Standards Committees and hearing panels continue to uphold complaints across a range of authorities, with consistent themes emerging.

A number of cases relate to failures to treat others with respect and inappropriate conduct in meetings.

Examples were provided and discussed from other authorities across the country where key breaches had been identified:

The details included:-

- Nature of the conduct
- Sanctions / outcomes
- Matters to Note / Learning Points

There is increasing scrutiny of Member conduct outside formal meetings, particularly interactions with residents and officers which can lead to bullying and misuse of position.

Misuse of information and poor casework handling remain a recurring source of complaints, often with data protection implications.

Issues of probity, bias and influence in quasi-judicial roles also continue to present significant risk.

The Director Law & Governance added the pressure of social media making Members contactable all the time was also a factor.

A lengthy discussion took place including Facebook complaints and if these should occur when comments are made via private and restricted Facebook groups. The Director Law & Governance stated that the Nolan principles which links to the code of conduct can apply to all forms of communications. It was also noted that failure to abide by a resolution would result in a breach.

Members also discussed failures to declare interests and how that can lead to a criminal offence. The Director Law & Governance would flag all these issues up at the code of conduct training sessions which are provided to elected Members.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN UPDATE

The Director Law & Governance provided a verbal report to the Committee and reported that the national annual report from the LGO would not be released until July.

Therefore, this item would be included on the next Standards Committee agenda when comparisons could be made with the national picture and trends across other Councils.

A Member commented on social housing and would any data be available on that subject area. The Director Law & Governance stated that was dealt with by the Housing Advisory Board and that kind of information can be compiled.

It was agreed:

That the verbal update be noted.

8 URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business was reported.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Standards Committee meeting was scheduled to take place at 6.00pm on Thursday the 24th September 2026 at Bury Town Hall.

COUNCILLOR T RAFIQ
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.00pm)