STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2026

Present:

Councillor Kevin Gillott (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Helen Wetherall (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Pat Antcliff
Councillor Fran Petersen
Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Kathy Rouse

Also Present:

A Smith	Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
A Bryan	Governance Manager
T Fuller	Senior Governance Officer

STA/30/25-26 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Cupit.

STA/31/25-26 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

STA/32/25-26 **Minutes of Last Meeting**

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on 12 December 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

STA/33/25-26 **Member Officer Protocol**

Committee considered a report which presented the draft revised Member Officer Relations Protocol. The report highlighted that the Local Government Association (LGA) advised a much more inclusive review when creating and reviewing such protocols. Therefore, Members were being asked to consider how to move this forward, as well as considering the immediate changes to the document.

Committee discussed the report. Some Members suggested that a substantive review may not be appropriate in light of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Some Members suggested that a more direct approach may be needed when tackling recent issues, regarding Member – Officer relations. The Committee discussed how to appraise Members of the changes to the protocol, and it was agreed that the final protocol would be sent to the respective Group Leaders.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Rules for Councillor – Officer Relations be renamed the Member

Officer Relations Protocol to align it with the LGA guidance.

2. That Members commented on and approved the amended version for inclusion in the Constitution for 2026.

3. That the Monitoring Officer and the Governance Manager bring a report to the next meeting in relation to the issues raised by the LGA guidance on Member Officer Relations Protocol.

STA/34/25-26 **Annual Gifts and Hospitality Report**

Committee considered a report which advised of the details of all entries in the Council's Gifts and Hospitality Register in respect of offers of gifts and hospitality made to Members and officers of the Council during the period January 2025 to December 2025.

Committee discussed the report. Some Members referenced the fact that there were few gifts, and they were small in value.

RESOLVED –

That the contents of the annual report in respect of offers of gifts and hospitality made to Members and officers for the period January 2025 to December 2025, be noted.

STA/35/25-26 **Code of Conduct - Recent Cases Update**

Committee considered a report which updated Members with specific recent Code of Conduct cases. The report included details on each case and the result of each investigation.

Committee discussed the report. Some Members suggested that, in relation to the WhatsApp case, it should be made clear that people need to be careful even when using a personal phone. It was agreed that the cases would be emailed to the Group Leaders.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

STA/36/25-26 **Review of the Constitution**

Committee considered a report which progressed the annual process of reviewing the Constitution. The report proposed amendments relating to Advisory Bodies, Community Governance Reviews, Questions by Councillors and Council Motions.

Committee discussed the report. Some Members had queries relating to advisory bodies. It was clarified that there was no advisory body relating to LGR and it was agreed that appropriate wording would be added to allow the Monitoring Officer to add and take out advisory bodies where necessary. Some Members suggested that the amendments relating to Questions by Councillors and Council Motions would create some uncertainty, but it was felt that the changes were sensible and any interpretation could be done by the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the proposed changes be agreed and recommended to Council for inclusion in the Constitution.

STA/37/25-26 **Sub-Committee Hearing Procedure**

Committee considered a report which sought approval to establish a Standards Sub-Committee to consider and determine allegations that a Member had breached the Code of Conduct.

Committee considered the report. It was felt that the procedure set out was a fair one. Members discussed who would sit on the Sub-Committee, it was suggested that the Sub-Committee comprise of one Labour, one Conservative and one Independent Member where possible.

RESOLVED –

1. That a Standards Sub-Committee be established.

2. That the hearing procedure, to be followed by the Standards Sub-Committee when conducting a hearing, be approved.

STA/38/25-26 **Complaints Update**

The Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer provided an update on the number of complaints that had been received against Councillors. Members heard that there were 9 ongoing complaints in total, the majority of which were NEDDC Councillors, and the reasons for the complaints were clarified.

Committee discussed the update. Some Members queried whether Councillor’s social media channels were monitored. Members heard that officers were looking into the options available where a Councillors post was of a defamatory nature against the Council. It was highlighted that any post that raised safeguarding issues needed reporting.

RESOLVED –

That the update be noted.

STA/39/25-26 **Work Programme**

The Committee considered its work programme for the remainer of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – that the work programme be noted.

STA/40/2 **Urgent Business**

5-26 None.