

Agenda

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Standards Committee

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Thursday 14 November 2024**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Long Room - Oxford Town Hall**

For further information please contact:

Dr Brenda McCollum, Committee and Member Services Officer,
Committee Services Officer

☎ 01865 252784

✉ standards@oxford.gov.uk

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Committee Membership

Councillors: Membership 7: Quorum 3: substitutes are permitted.

Councillor Susanna Pressel (Chair)

Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton

Councillor Lizzy Diggins (Labour and Co-operative Party)

Councillor Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini

Councillor Judith Harley

Councillor Kate Robinson

Councillor Naomi Waite

Chris Ballinger Independent Person non-voting

Jill McCleery Independent Person non-voting

Andrew Mills-Hicks Independent Person non-voting

Osama Raja Independent Person non-voting

Peter Nowland Blackbird Leys Parish Council
(Blackbird Leys Ward)

Apologies and notification of substitutes received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting. Substitutes for the Chair and Vice-chair do not take on these roles.

Agenda

	Pages
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Declarations of Interest	
3 Code of Conduct: summary of complaints and individual dispensations - 1 July 2023 until 31 October 2024	1 - 8
Purpose of report:	
To advise the Committee of:	
1. the number of complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct which have been, or are to be, considered by the Head of Law and Governance (in her statutory capacity as the authority's Monitoring Officer) and the Independent Persons. The report also notes the outcome, where complaints have been concluded; and	
2. the number of dispensations to an individual member, granted under Section 33 of the 2011 Localism Act, by the Monitoring Officer, following consultation with an Independent Person.	
Recommendation:	
That the Standards Committee notes the content of the report.	
4 Appointment of Independent Persons in 2024/2025	9 - 10
Purpose of the report:	
This report informs the Committee on the progress for the appointment of Independent Persons in 2024.	
Recommendation: That the Standards Committee resolves to:	
1. note the progress on the appointment of Independent Persons in 2024;	
2. agree to appoint one opposition member of the Standards Committee to serve on the interview panel as required at paragraph 5, ii) of the report.	
5 Member Training Update	11 - 18

Purpose of report:

To update the Standards Committee on the delivery of Member training in 2022 and 2023 and the arrangements for member training in 2024.

Recommendation: That the Standards Committee resolves to:

1. **Note** the delivery of member induction training and development in 2024
2. **Approve** the continuation of the delivery programme for 2025.

6 Minutes of the previous meeting

19 - 20

The Committee is recommended to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023.

7 Dates of future meetings

The Committee is scheduled to meet at 6.00pm on the following dates:

- 11 March 2025
- 07 July 2025
- 13 November 2025

Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

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Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

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To: Standards Committee
Date: 14 November 2024
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Code of Conduct: summary of complaints and individual dispensations – 1 July 2023 until 31 October 2024

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To advise the Committee of: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The number and status of complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct which have been, or are to be, considered by the Head of Law and Governance (in her statutory capacity as the authority's Monitoring Officer) in consultation with one of the Council's Independent Persons.2. The number of dispensations to an individual member, granted under Section 33 of the 2011 Localism Act, by the Monitoring Officer, following consultation with an Independent Person.
Key decision:	No
Recommendation: That the Standards Committee notes the content of the report.	

Introduction and background

1. In compliance with legislation relating to the standards and conduct of elected councillors, the Council has in place complaints handling arrangements to enable an individual to make a formal complaint that an elected or co-opted member of the Council, or of a parish council within the Council's area, has failed to comply with the authority's Members' Code of Conduct.
2. The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting high standards of ethical behaviour by developing, maintaining and monitoring the Members' Code of Conduct. This report from the Monitoring Officer, which identifies any issues or learning points arising from the complaints received, contributes to that monitoring process.

3. The key stages of the complaints handling arrangements can be summarised as:

<p>Initial tests</p>	<p>The Monitoring Officer will apply the following “initial tests” to the complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a complaint against one or more named councillors of Oxford City Council or a parish council within the city boundaries; • The named councillor was in office at the time of the alleged conduct and the Code of Conduct was in force at the time; • The complaint, if proven, would be a breach of the Code under which the councillor was operating at the time of the alleged misconduct.
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>The complaint will be assessed and a decision made by the Council’s Monitoring Officer in consultation with an Independent Person as to the next steps. At this stage the options open to the Monitoring Officer are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further action • Informal resolution brokered by the Monitoring Officer and/or Group Leader • Referred for investigation • Referred to the police or other regulatory agency
<p>Investigation</p>	<p>A formal investigation may be conducted by an officer from Oxford City Council, an officer from another local authority or an independent investigator.</p> <p>The investigating officer will review the complaint and supporting evidence and may interview some or all of the people concerned.</p> <p>The investigating officer will then produce a draft report. The complainant and the councillor concerned will normally have an opportunity to comment on the draft report. The investigating officer will then submit the report to the Monitoring Officer.</p>
<p>Local Hearing</p>	<p>The Monitoring Officer will consider the findings of the investigation and, in consultation with the Independent Person(s), determine what action to take. At this stage the options open to the Monitoring Officer are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Hearing – complaint to be determined by the Standards Committee; • Local Resolution - a fair resolution of the complaint which is acceptable to all parties brokered by the Monitoring Officer; or • No action - complaint dismissed

Complaints made against members of Oxford City Council or a Parish Council

4. In the period 1 July 2023 up to and including 15 October 2024 the Monitoring Officer dealt with the following twelve complaints concerning nine city councillors and one parish councillor.
5. The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person(s), where appropriate, considered the complaints contained in the table above and made the following decisions:

Ref	Received	City/Parish	Code – alleged breach in behaviour	Action taken	
				Complaint heard at:	Outcome:
1	June 2023	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selflessness • Objectivity • Accountability • Openness • Honesty and Integrity • Leadership • Respect for others • Bullying • Impartiality • Confidential Information • Knowledge • Professional advice 	Assessment	Dismissal
2	July 2023	Parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Openness • Honesty and Integrity • Respect for others • Bullying • Confidential information 		On hold due to Police investigation
3	September 2023	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity • Honesty and Integrity 	Monitoring Officer	Dismissed
4	April 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Bullying and Harassment • Impartiality of Officers of the Council • Disrepute 	External Investigation	Currently being assessed
5	April 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Bullying and Harassment • Impartiality of Officers of the Council • Disrepute 	External Investigation	Currently being assessed

6	April 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Bullying and Harassment • Impartiality of Officers of the Council • Disrepute 	Independent Person	Completed
7	May 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying and Harassment 	Monitoring Officer	Dismissed
8	June 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Bullying and Harassment 	Monitoring Officer	Dismissed
9	June 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selflessness • Accountability • Honest and Integrity • Leadership • Respect for others 	Monitoring Officer	Dismissed
10	June 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Openness • Respect for Others • Knowledge • Council resources 	Monitoring Officer	
11	July 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability 	Independent Person	
12	September 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty and Integrity • Respect for others • Bullying 	Independent Person	
13	September 2024	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for others • Bullying 	Monitoring Officer	

Summary of complaints and learning points

6. The first complaint concerned the allegation that a city councillor had failed to help a member in their constituency in a housing matter. The Interim Monitoring Officer considered the case and found the complaint to be against a service provided by the Council, and not the conduct of the Subject Councillor. Therefore, the Interim Monitoring Officer dismissed the complaint, with no further action to be taken.
7. The second complaint concerned an allegation against a parish councillor that is currently under a Police investigation and therefore cannot be reported against in this report. No further action will be taken in relation to such complaints until any related criminal/regulatory investigation, proceedings or processes have been concluded.
8. The third complaint concerned an allegation that a city councillor had made tweets on the social media platform X, that were unbecoming of a member of Oxford City Council. The Monitoring Officer is dismissed the complaint as this was outside the scope of the Code of Conduct.

9. The fourth and fifth complaint concerned an allegation that two City Councillors disrupted the proceedings of a Committee in March 2024. The Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person agreed these complaints should be investigated by an external lawyer; this process is currently ongoing.
10. The sixth complaint concerned an allegation that a City Councillor disrupted proceedings at a Committee in April 2024. The Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person reviewed the complaint and recommended the Councillor drafted a written apology and attend a Code of Conduct Training session.
11. The sixth complaint concerned a City Councillor's conduct. The Monitoring Officer dismissed the complaint as it was outside the Code of Conduct.
12. The seventh complaint concerned a City Councillor's conduct. The Monitoring Officer dismissed the complaint as it was outside the Code of Conduct.
13. The eighth complaint concerned a City Councillor's conduct. The Monitoring Officer dismissed the complaint as it was outside the Code of Conduct.
14. The ninth complaint concerned a City Councillor's conduct, further evidence has been requested before the investigation can commence.
15. The tenth complaint concerned an allegation that a city councillor had made tweets on the social media platform X, that were unbecoming of a member of Oxford City Council. The Monitoring Officer is currently reviewing the complaint with an Independent Person.
16. The eleventh complaint concerned a City Councillor regarding an interview with the local press, the Monitoring Officer is currently reviewing with an Independent Person.
17. The twelfth complaint concerned an allegation that a city councillor had made tweets on the social media platform X, that were unbecoming of a member of Oxford City Council. The Monitoring Officer is currently reviewing the complaint.

Dispensations granted to an individual Member

18. The Localism Act 2011 prevents members from participating in any business of the Council where they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) unless they have sought a dispensation under Section 33 of the Act. Applications must be made in writing and dispensations may be sought for a period of up to four years.
19. On 1 October 2022 Council granted a general dispensation, to remain in force for a period of 4 years (ending on 30 September 2026), to all Oxford City Council members and co-opted members, to speak and vote where they would otherwise have a DPI in the following matters:

- **Determining an allowance** (including special responsibility allowances), travelling expense, payment or indemnity given to Members
- **Housing:** where the Member (or spouse or partner) holds a tenancy or lease with the Council as long as the matter does not relate to the particular tenancy or lease of the Member (their spouse or partner);
- **Housing Benefit/Universal Credit:** where the Councillor (or spouse or partner) receives housing benefit;
- Any **Ceremonial Honours** given to Members;
- Setting the **Council Tax** or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 (or any subsequent legislation); and
- Setting a **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme** or Local scheme for the payment of business rates (including eligibility for rebates and reductions) for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 (or any subsequent legislation)

20. In October 2018 Council also delegated the granting of dispensations to an individual member under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to the Monitoring Officer, following consultation with an Independent Person.
21. In the period covered by this report there have been no requests for an individual dispensation under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011.

Legal implications

22. The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to have a Code of Conduct which sets out the standards expected of Members whenever they act in their official capacity. The Code must also have in place a suitable procedure at a local level to investigate and determine allegations against elected Members and co-opted Members. The Council is also responsible for having arrangements in place to investigate and determine allegations against Parish Councillors.

Financial implications

23. There is a cost to the authority when a complaint is referred for external investigation this is determined by market factors in terms of the availability of investigators identified through complaint procurement processes.

Risk management

24. If the Council fails to adopt and maintain a Code of Conduct and process for the investigation of complaints which is fit for purpose, robust and transparent then there are risks to the Council's reputation and also to the integrity of its corporate governance and decision-making processes as it will not be compliant with legislation. Formal consideration of requests for dispensation minimises the risk of the Council not following lawful procedures in respect of members' interests.

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To: Standards Committee
Date: 14 November 2024
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Appointment of Independent Persons in 2024/2025

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	This report informs the Committee on the progress for the appointment of Independent Persons in 2024.
Key decision:	No
Recommendation: That the Standards Committee resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. note the progress on the appointment of Independent Persons in 2024;2. agree to appoint one opposition member of the Standards Committee to serve on the interview panel as required at paragraph 5, ii) of the report.	

Introduction and background

1. The Localism Act 2011 (“The Act”) (Section 28, subsections (7) and (8)) requires the Council to appoint one or more Independent Persons.
2. The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2015 (“The Regulations”) require the Council to invite relevant Independent Persons to a Panel (being a committee appointed by the authority under section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972) for the purposes of advising the authority on matters relating to dismissal of relevant officers of the authority(the chief executive, the chief finance officer and the monitoring officer).
3. At the meeting on 24 June 2019 the Standards Committee agreed to note and approve the Monitoring Officer’s arrangements for the appointment of independent persons in July 2019.
4. This report informs the Committee on the progress and continued arrangements for the appointment of Independent Persons in 2024/2025.
5. The Monitoring Officer has commenced a formal recruitment exercise for the appointment of Independent Persons based on the following principles:
 - i. The recruitment exercise to include advertisement, application and interview

- ii. The interview panel to consist of the Monitoring Officer, Chair of the Standards Committee and one opposition member from the Standards Committee
 - iii. The term of appointment to be for 5 years (to March 2029)
 - iv. The Independent Person “job description” to be approved by the Monitoring Officer to be expanded to include considering evidence and advising Council on the course of action for the Disciplinary Committee to follow whenever there is the prospect of dismissal of a statutory officer
 - v. The statutory restrictions on eligibility shall apply
 - vi. Any application from an existing Independent Person to be considered on its merits
 - vii. The appointments to be confirmed at Full Council in March 2025 with a positive vote by a majority of councillors
12. The advert for the recruitment of the Independent Persons will be published in the local press and on the Council’s website in early December.
13. The interview dates are to be confirmed but are expected to take place in January or February 2025.

Legal implications

14. To comply with the combined requirements of the Act and the Regulations, the Council should appoint at least two Independent Persons.

Financial implications

15. The decision to proceed with a recruitment exercise for the appointment of Independent Persons in 2025 carries a modest financial burden which will be accommodated in the 2024/25 Member Support budget.

Risk management

16. Failing to appoint an Independent Person would place the Council in breach of its statutory duty under the Act and prevent the Monitoring Officer from dealing with complaints in accordance with the Council’s code of conduct complaints procedure. In addition in the event of there being a need to consider dismissal of a relevant officer and the Council not having appointed at least two Independent Persons the Council would be required to approach another local authority to seek to invite their appointed Independent Persons to form part of a Panel in accordance with Regulation 6 paragraph 5 of the Regulations.

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To: Standards Committee
Date: 14 November 2024
Report of: Head of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Title of Report: Member Training Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the Standards Committee on the delivery of Member training in 2022 and 2023 and the arrangements for member training in 2024.
Recommendation: That the Standards Committee resolves to:	
1.	Note the delivery of member induction training and development in 2024
2.	Approve the continuation of the delivery programme for 2025.

Background

1. The Standards Committee has responsibility in the Council's Constitution for receiving reports from, and advising the Monitoring Officer on, training for members.

Member training and development scheme 2020-24

2. At its meeting on 2 March 2020 the Standards Committee endorsed a Member Training and Development Scheme for 2020-24. That Training Scheme was subsequently approved by the Monitoring Officer and is attached as Appendix 1.
3. The Training Scheme builds on the rules relating to compulsory member training set out in the Councillors' Allowances Scheme which forms Part 26 of the Council's Constitution. The Allowances Scheme requires that members who fail to attend the following training will have a reduction applied to their basic allowances:
 - i. Induction for newly elected members (new members only)
 - ii. Compulsory planning training
 - iii. Compulsory code of conduct training
 - iv. Compulsory licensing training (members of licensing committees only)
4. The Training Scheme articulates an expanded induction programme for newly elected members which includes training on safeguarding awareness, finance, and inclusive behaviours. It also sets out an indicative offer of wider skills-based training

and development opportunities for members beyond the compulsory training that all members are required to attend.

5. The Training Scheme reduced the frequency of compulsory Code of Conduct training from annually, as it was previously, to every other year for all members. Compulsory Planning training is also due take place every two years, with the intention being that these training requirements will apply in election years only.

Review of Member training and development in 2022/2023

Compulsory training

Code of Conduct

44 of the 48 elected members attended the compulsory Code of Conduct training sessions held in 2022 and 2023. The majority of members attended one of the two scheduled sessions and a further session was arranged as a mop-up session. A further date was offered to members who had not yet completed the training, following the by-elections in March and a further mop-up session in September 2023.

Table 1: Code of Conduct Training held since the Local Election in May 2022.

17 May 2022	18.00 – 19.00	23
7 June 2022	10.00 – 11.30	12
20 September 2023	18:00 – 19:00	9

6. The training sessions were presented by the Monitoring Officer and the Committee and Member Services Manager. Although no quantitative data had been sought following this training, qualitative data has indicated that the training was received positively, and most members found the content, which had been refreshed previously to include case studies and more time for discussion, to be helpful and informative.
7. Of the remaining members who did not completed their training to date, the Committee and Member Services Manager organised a reduction in their allowance as per the Constitution Part 26.2(c).

Licensing

8. The fifteen councillors who are members of both Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee and the General Purposes Licensing Committee were required to attend a training session before 31 July. Eleven of those councillors attended one of the sessions which were held on 19 May 2022 immediately before the licensing committee meeting. Five Members There remained one member who had yet to undertake training, and subsequently unable to sit on a Licensing Sub-Committee. The Member eventually stepped down from the Committee, and a substitute completed a training session on 31 August. The amend to the Committee was confirmed at Council on 2 October.

Review of Member Induction Period 2024

9. The Member Induction Period was reviewed ahead of the May 2024 Local Election, which included the addition of the Members' Market Stall event on the 15 May 2024, and the 'Members Guide to Services' booklet.
10. The Market Stall Event saw newly elected and current Members attend the Town Hall to meet with staff from the across the Council and Oxford Direct Services and OX Place, the Council's two Companies. While attendance numbers were not noted, the event was well attended and positive verbal feedback was received from Members in attendance, both during and after the event.
11. The 'Members Guide to Services' was a booklet designed for all Members to provide an understanding of the different services and departments of the Council. Members received a copy during the Market Stall event on the 15 May and Annual Council on the 16 May.

Planning

12. All members were invited to three training sessions on 13 May, 14 May and 15 May. An additional session was held on 8 July 2024, all sessions were led by the Team Leader for Planning Policy, the Development Management Team Leader, the Planning Policy and Place Manager and a Planning Lawyer. below is a breakdown of attendance.

Table 2: Planning Training held since the Local Election in May 2024.

13 May 2024	10.00 – 12.00	7
14 May 2024	18.00 – 20.00	23
15 May 2024	14:00 – 16:00	7
8 July 2024	18:00 – 20:00	10

13. All sessions were led by the Team Leader for Planning Policy, the Development Management Team Leader, the Planning Policy and Place Manager and a Planning Lawyer. While no quantitative data has been received, verbal feedback has been received and will be reviewed ahead of the 2026 Member Induction.
14. Of the remaining member who did not complete their training to date, the Committee and Member Services Manager is in the process of organising a reduction in their allowance as per the Constitution Part 26.2(c).

Compulsory training

Code of Conduct

13. 39 of the 48 elected members attended the compulsory Code of Conduct training sessions held in 2024. The majority of members attended one of the two scheduled sessions and a further session was arranged as a mop-up session. A further date was offered to members who had not yet completed the training,

following the by-elections in March and a further mop-up session in September 2023.

Table 3: Code of Conduct Training held since the Local Election in May 2022.

13 May 2024	18.00 – 19.00	19
5 September 2024	18.00 – 19.00	20

15. The training sessions were presented by the Monitoring Officer and the Committee and Member Services Manager. Although no quantitative data had been sought following this training, qualitative data has indicated that the training was received positively, and most members found the content, which had been refreshed previously to include case studies and more time for discussion, to be helpful and informative.

Licensing

16. The fifteen councillors who are members of one or both Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee and the General Purposes Licensing Committee were required to attend an in-person training sessions before 31 July. Eleven of those councillors attended the sessions which were held on 20 May 2024 immediately before and after the General Purposes Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee. Four of the five members who hadn't attend in May attended a 'washup' session on 25 June 2024, allowing them to attend the sub-committees. The remaining member will not be able to attend a training session until the change in committee in May 2025 ahead of Annual Council.

Non-Compulsory Training Sessions and Briefings

17. Table 4 sets out the additional (non-compulsory) training sessions and briefings that have been scheduled to date in 2022, 2023 and 2024 together with attendance figures where these have already taken place. Where fewer than six members register for a session officers will consider whether it should go ahead but attendance has generally been quite high and no sessions have been cancelled due to low take up.

Table 4: Additional training and briefings offered in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 to date.

Topic	Date	# of attendees
Housing Services	29 June 2022	14
Motions and Council's Procedure Rules	01 September 2022	6
Community Services	13 September 2022	9
OX Place	21 September 2022	10
Oxpens-OXWED	05 October 2022	5

Media and Social Media	12 October 2022	3
Chief Constable's Annual Address	14 November 2022	11
Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	22 November 2022	10
Elections Act 2022	9 February 2023	11
Visitor Economy	21 February 2023	6
Landlord Services Transformation	27 March 2023	4
Thames Water Q&A	27 March 2023	17
Police Briefing	11 July 2023	8
Decide & Provide (County organised)	11 September 2023	No attendance collected
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	11 September 2023	8
Housing Revenue Budget	26 September 2023	9
Leisure Briefing	11 October 2023	12
Annual Address by the PCC and Chief Constable	09 November 2023	13
Energy Efficiency Measures	14 November 2023	11
Members Enquiry Form Demonstration	8 February 2024	10
Members Enquiry Form (Member Induction)	23 May 2024	6
Member Enquiry Form (Member Induction)	29 May 2024	12
Bus Shelter Briefing	3 June 2024	14
Local Government Finance (Member Induction)	6 June 2024	11
Audit and Governance (Member Induction)	11 June 2024	6
Member Enquiry Form (Member Induction)	19 June 2024	3
Feasibility study re Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID)	23 July 2024	9
Empty Properties Briefing	12 September	20
Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance/Domestic Abuse Awareness	3 October 2024	7

Online Training

18. The Council has recently implemented online training to meet the current requirements for the Council, and to ensure Members were equipped with current knowledge and
14. A six-module course on Cyber-Awareness Training was circulated in May 2024. It is crucial that all Members stay informed and vigilant against potential cyber security threats. The modules include keeping safe online, learning best practices for protecting personal and professional information while using the internet and Recognising Phishing Attempts. It will also develop skills to identify and avoid phishing scams, which are a common method used by cybercriminals to steal sensitive information. These are needed to keep the Council safe, but also for our cyber accreditations.
19. While the primary goal of this training is to enhance the Council's workplace security and to learn valuable skills that can help protect your Councillors' personal information. This training was an opportunity to improve all Members' overall cyber security awareness, which is increasingly important in an increasingly digital world.
20. The Health and Safety Training was circulated to all Members in September 2024; under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, the Council has a responsibility to provide sufficient training and instruction for employees, volunteers and others who undertake work on the Council's behalf.
21. The Council's Health and Safety Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities for elected members which include their own personal health and safety; understanding sources of help and support; and leading by example. Also for members with specific cabinet or committee responsibilities they need to ensure there are suitable resources and strategic direction for the Council to discharge its health and safety responsibilities; they need to consider health and safety within the context of their decision-making and monitor the Council's health and safety performance.

Member Training and Development in 2024/2025

22. Officers will also look at ways to improve the level and quality of information provided to members about the work and priorities of different Council services, to make it easier for newly elected members to understand how the organisation is structured and what work is already underway.
23. A number of suggestions have been received for briefing topics in 2024/25 and these are listed below. Senior officers may also suggest briefing topics. Feedback was received from members that holding fewer, high quality briefings would be preferable to holding lots of briefings that are of less interest. In formulating a programme of member briefings for 2024, officers will consider which of the suggested topics are best addressed through member briefings and which could be addressed in other ways:
 - Housing needs
 - Community Services
 - Benefits and Welfare
 - Council communications

- Food poverty (particularly child food poverty)
- Littering and street cleaning services
- Noise nuisance from licensed premises
- Oxford West End Development Ltd.
- Anti-social behaviour
- Zero Emissions Zone
- Traffic, transport and parking
- Street maintenance
- Rent repayment orders (whereby private sector tenants can reclaim their rent if landlords have committed certain offences)

Legal issues

15. There is no legal requirement for the Council to adopt a scheme for member training but doing so is considered good corporate governance and member support practice.
16. Council has collectively agreed that members who fail to attend the applicable compulsory induction and training (detailed in paragraph 3) will forego a portion of their allowances, as set out in Part 26.2 of the Council's Constitution.

Financial issues

17. Ordinarily the majority of member training is delivered by officers of the Council in the Town Hall. Services are responsible for service-based training (e.g. planning, licensing), and may use external trainers where service budgets allow.
18. There is a small budget for member training held by Committee and Member Services which has been used to pay for one or two external trainers per year as required to meet members' training and development needs in particular areas that the Council cannot deliver (e.g. charring skills, inclusive behaviours). This budget is also used to fund individual members' attendance at external training courses that are relevant to their special responsibilities or the reasonable learning and development of a councillor, with the agreement of their Group Leader.
19. Any move away from the provision of in-house training or an increase in the number of specialist external training courses would result in an additional financial cost to the Council which has not been budgeted for.

Risk

20. There is a risk that if members undertaking regulatory functions are not equipped to undertake those roles, then the Council's decision making could be undermined and subject to an increased risk of challenge, which, if successful, could be very costly for the Council. Similarly, if members are not trained on the Code of Conduct there is a risk of an increase in the number of complaints that members have breached the Code of Conduct.

Equalities

21. All newly elected councillors are invited to declare any special requirements relating to the provision of training and Committee and Member Services will work with the individual to ensure that those needs are met.

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Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee on Monday 10 July 2023

www.oxford.gov.uk



Committee members present:

Councillor Humberstone

Councillor Pressel (Chair)

Councillor Lygo (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Snowton

Councillor Fry (as substitute for Cllr Djafari-Marbini)

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Emma Griffiths, Legal Advisor, Law and Governance

Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer, Law and Governance

Apologies:

Councillors Djafari-Marbini, Latif, Morris and Andrew Mills-Hicks (Independent Person) sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

1. Election of Chair for the year 2023/24

Cllr Pressel was elected Chair for the Council year 2023/24.

2. Election of Vice Chair for the year 2023/24

Cllr Lygo was elected Vice-Chair for the Council year 2023/24.

3. Declarations of Interest

None received.

4. Code of Conduct: summary of complaints and individual dispensations - 1 February 2023 until 30 June 2023

The Standards Committee noted the contents of the report.

The Chair advised that a letter had been prepared to send to Littlemore Parish Council to encourage members of the Parish Council who had not completed Code of Conduct training to do so. However it was decided not to send this until the new Clerk of Littlemore Parish Council was in post. She confirmed that this would now be actioned.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee agreed to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023.

6. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates and times of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.01 pm and ended at 6.05 pm

Chair
November 2023

Date: Thursday 16

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.