

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee on Thursday 13 November 2025

www.oxford.gov.uk



Committee members present:

Councillor Pressel (Chair)

Councillor Djafari-Marbini

Councillor Waite

Councillor Smowton

Councillor Harley

Councillor Morris

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Emma Jackman, Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)

Also present:

Eric Feltin, Independent Person (non-voting)

15. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Diggins sent apologies and attended online.

The Chair welcomed the new Independent Person, Eric Feltin.

16. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harley noted her membership of the same political party as Councillor David Henwood who is referenced in one report on the agenda. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this does not qualify as a conflict of interest but noted that Councillor Harley must attend the meeting with an open mind. It was advised that if unable to do so, Councillor Harley should choose to leave the room during deliberation of the relevant item. Councillor Harley also noted that Councillor Malik, referenced in the report, is her ward councillor. The Monitoring Officer provided the same advice on this matter.

Councillor Smowton joined the meeting.

Councillor Smowton noted that one of the reports on the agenda refers to Councillor Railton, his wife. It was clarified that the report is anonymised, and Councillor Railton is not specifically mentioned.

Councillor Diggins joined online.

17. Minutes of the previous meeting

Councillor Djafari-Marbini requested that note of her online attendance at the last meeting be corrected on the minutes and added in both relevant sections of the document; this update was confirmed. Councillor Djafari-Marbini also noted some confusion relating to the current rules around online attendance at Committee meetings since the pandemic. The Monitoring Officer explained that remote attendance is managed in line with relevant legislation, and it is not possible to formally note online attendance as the temporary provisions set out during the pandemic have now ended. Councillor Djafari-Marbini recommended to the Chair that the Leader of the Council may write to Parliament regarding an update to the relevant legislation.

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2025 as a true and accurate record.

18. Addresses by members of the public

None.

19. Councillor addresses on any item for discussion

None.

20. Code of Conduct: summary of complaints and individual dispensations - 20 June 2025 to 31 October 2025

The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) had submitted a report to advise the Committee of:

- The number and status of complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct which have been, or are to be, considered by the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (in her statutory capacity as the authority's Monitoring Officer) in consultation with one of the Council's Independent Persons.
- 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
- Update on the action taken in relation to the complaint which was upheld against Councillor Henwood by a Local Hearing Panel on the 27 August 2025.

The Chair noted a correction to the dates listed in paragraph 4 of the report; 2023 was corrected to 2025. The Chair summarised the contents of the report.

In relation to the complaint against Councillor Henwood, the Monitoring Officer summarised the process which had been undertaken and confirmed that it had been concluded the code of conduct had been breached. This was agreed by a Local Hearing Panel which also determined that Councillor Henwood be reprimanded by the Monitoring Officer and that he should send formal apologies to the complainant and the Standards Committee. The Committee were asked to consider the adequacy of these apologies.

The Chair queried the duration of time which it had taken for the letter of apology to have been sent to the complainant. The Monitoring Officer clarified the time frames and delays which took place and confirmed that the letter from Councillor Henwood was sent within the required time limit.

The Chair invited Members to review the letter of apology to the Standards Committee.

Councillor Waite requested clarification on why the Local Hearing Panel had requested the letter be sent back to the Committee for consideration. Councillor Diggins, as chair of the relevant Local Hearing Panel, explained that it had been determined that the letter be brought back to the Committee in any event.

The Monitoring Officer also noted that Councillor Henwood maintains that he did not breach the code of conduct as determined by the Local Hearing Panel, and the Committee were to determine if the apology letters to the Chair of the Standards Committee and to the complainant were sufficient.

The Chair invited a vote on whether the letter to the Chair of the Standards Committee was acceptable. When put to a vote, the Committee voted by 4 in favour, that the apology to the Chair of the Standards Committee was adequate.

Councillor Waite noted her belief that the letter was inadequate as she did not believe it addressed the misleading nature of the comments Councillor Henwood had made on social media.

The Chair requested that the Committee then consider the letter of apology to the complainant. When put to a vote, the Committee voted by 4 in favour, that the apology to the complainant was adequate.

Councillor Waite noted her belief that this letter was also inadequate as it did not address the relevant issues.

The Monitoring Officer noted the outcome of both votes and clarified that the matter was therefore concluded.

The Committee **noted** the content of the report and **confirmed** that the apologies issued by Councillor Henwood were satisfactory.

21. Member Training Update

The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) had submitted a report to update the Standards Committee on the delivery of Member training from July 2025 to November 2025.

Councillor Harley positively commented on a social media training session recently delivered and praised the responsible officer.

The Committee and Member Services Manager informed the Committee that a review is being undertaken to ensure that maximum engagement for training sessions can be captured in the future.

Councillor Djafari-Marbini asked whether the Council could update its social media training to include content related to accusations of misinformation.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this would be considered as part of the review into member development. It was noted that efforts will be made to encourage engagement and attendance at optional training sessions. The feedback from Councillor Harley was welcomed.

The Committee **noted** the report.

22. Dates of future meetings

The Committee **noted** the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.21 pm

Chair **Date: Tuesday 17 March 2026**

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.