

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee on Thursday 3 July 2025

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Committee members present:

Councillor Pressel (Chair)

Councillor Diggins (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Harley

Councillor Waite

Councillor Max 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

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Smowton sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

1. Election of Chair for Council Year 2025-2026

Councillor Diggins proposed, and Councillor Waite seconded the nomination of Councillor Pressel to be elected as Chair of the Committee for 2025/26.

There were no further nominations.

The Standards Committee resolved that Councillor Pressel be elected as the Chair for 2025/26.

2. Election of Vice-Chair for Council Year 2025-2026

Councillor Waite proposed, and Councillor Pressel seconded the nomination of Councillor Diggins to be elected as Vice-Chair of the Committee for 2025/26.

There were no further nominations.

The Standards Committee resolved that Councillor Diggins be elected as the Vice-Chair for 2025/26.

3. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Smowton sent apologies.

Councillor Djafari-Marbini attended online.

4. Declarations of Interest

None.

5. Appointment of Independent Persons

The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) had submitted a report to ask the Standards Committee to recommend to Council to authorise the Monitoring Officer to re-appoint Chris Ballinger and Andrew Mills-Hicks and to appoint Eric Feltin, Lois Lezemore, Ala Soualhi and Dr. Bushra Almunir Yousef as the Council's Independent Persons for a five-year term, until July 2030.

The Committee and Member Services Manager was present to respond to questions.

The Chair invited questions from Committee members.

Councillor Harley queried the reference to the 'modest financial burden' of the appointments of new Independent Persons to which the Committee and Member Services Manager explained that the roles were advertised online through LinkedIn for which a small fee was paid.

The Committee resolved to:

- **Recommend** to Council to authorise the Monitoring Officer to re-appoint Chris Ballinger and Andrew Mills-Hicks and to appoint Eric Feltin, Lois Lezemore, Ala Soualhi and Dr. Bushra Almunir Yousef as the Council's Independent Persons for a five-year term.

Councillor Djafari-Marbini joined the meeting online.

6. 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 February 2025 to July 2025.

The Committee and Member Services Manager was present to respond to questions.

The Chair invited questions from Committee members.

Councillor Waite reflected on the length of licensing training courses and asked whether officers could consider reducing the six-hour duration and introduce shorter refresher training to accommodate members who had attended in previous years. Councillor Waite also requested that content be provided regarding street trading applications within future licensing training sessions. The Committee and Member Services Manager committing to communicating this feedback to relevant officers and explained that it is necessary to ensure training covers all relevant policy and regulations to any members sitting on licensing sub-committees. In relation to refresher training, the Committee heard that it is necessary for training to be standardised across all committee members and that there is likely not capacity to offer two training workstreams. The Committee and Member Services Manager committed to requesting street trading content be included in future training sessions.

Councillor Waite noted the hard work of licensing officers, and the high quality of training provided.

The Chair Pressel supported Councillor Waite's comments, noting the importance of understanding street trading rules within the city.

Councillor Harley, in relation to item 7, asked whether social media training could be added to the trainings schedule in response to the nature of recent complaints against councillors, as listed in the report. The Committee and Member Services Manager committed to discussing this with relevant officers, noting that the topic had been previously considered.

Councillor Morris joined the meeting.

Councillor Diggins noted that existing compulsory Code of Conduct training does include content relating to social media use but reflected that this could be further elaborated on.

The Chair, in relation to paragraph 2 of the report, queried the classification of Planning training as compulsory and asked whether it was possible to make Code of Conduct training compulsory for Parish Councillors. The Committee and Member Services Manager explained that planning training is required every two years for all members in line with the Council's constitution. It was confirmed that all 48 members have attended in the last two years. The Chair acknowledged this and requested it be clarified in the report. The Committee and Member Services Manager also explained that it is currently optional for Parish Councillors to attend Code of Conduct training, emphasising that invitations are always extended. The Committee and Member Services Manager committed to checking whether this could be made compulsory.

The Committee resolved to:

- **Note** the contents of the report.

7. Code of Conduct: summary of complaints and individual dispensations - 3 March 2025 to 20 June 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.

The Committee and Member Services Manager was present to respond to questions.

The Chair invited questions from Committee members.

Councillor Diggins referenced the list of complaints enclosed within the report and asked whether any issues exist with officer capacity to manage the number and whether any measures could be taken to mitigate this. It was also asked whether there have been any issues with meeting required deadlines for responding to complaints. The Committee and Member Services Manager confirmed that some cases remain ongoing due to issues with the capacity for the Monitoring Officer review each complaint and pass onto the two available Independent Persons. The Committee heard that the recent appointment of additional Independent Persons is expected to alleviate some capacity constraints.

Councillor Morris noted that meetings relating to complaints are often restricted to evening periods which can cause delays.

The Chair also noted that delays are often experienced when the subject councillor of the complaint has limited availability to attend relevant meetings.

Cllr Djafari-Marbini suggested that it could be useful for guidance on submitting complaints to be made more publicly available via the Council's website as means to reduce the number received. It was suggested that complaints may be submitted when it is unclear whether a councillor is acting in a personal capacity on social media or not.

The Chair noted that only one complaint contained within the report was dismissed on these grounds.

The Committee and Member Services Manager committed to discussing this feedback with officers and explained that when complaints are considered, it is always assessed as to whether a councillor was acting in a personal capacity or not. It was emphasised that this can be hard to determine in some cases.

Councillor Morris, in relation to Independent Persons, asked whether diversity and protected characteristics were considered during the hiring process. The Committee and Member Services Manager commented that the Independent Persons recently appointed reflect varied backgrounds and assured the Committee that diversity was considered

The Chair noted that 3 of the appointees are women.

The Committee resolved to:

- **Note** the contents of the report.

8. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meetings held on 11 March 2025 as a true and accurate record.

9. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.22 pm

Chair
November 2025

Date: Thursday 13

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.

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