STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 25 November 2025
Time: 6.00pm
Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Jackie Hollywell (Chair), Myla Arceno (Vice Chair), Rob Broom, Dermot Kehoe, Loraine Rossati, Jade Woods and Tom Wren

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Phil Bibby.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - STANDARDS 21 NOVEMBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 STANDARDS UPDATE - REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report providing members with an overview of the complaints under the Stevenage Borough Council's Code of Conduct for Members ("the Code") received to date, reviewing the arrangements in place for Member Code of Conduct complaints handling and updating members of the Government's response to the consultation in relation to Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities.

The Monitoring Officer gave an update to Members in relation to the number of complaints received since the Standards Committee last met in 2022 including several where no further action was required and one that was ongoing.

In relation to the Revised Complaints Procedure, the Monitoring Officer advised that she had reviewed the current Arrangements and had significantly rewritten and updated the Procedure. The new procedure, set out in Appendix A to the report, also included a criterion to which complaints would be assessed against.

The Committee were then advised that on the 11 November 2025 the Government had published its response to the consultation on improving the local governments standards framework. Although at present there was no timeframe for when the

legislation would follow as this was subject to when Parliamentary time allowed, key measures included:

- The introduction of a mandatory code of conduct, to include a behavioural code, for all local authorities;
- That all principal authorities convene formal Standards Committees to ensure objectivity, accountability and transparency;
- The requirement to offer individual support during code of conduct investigations to both the complainant and the councillor subject to the allegation;
- Publication of allegations and investigation outcomes.
- Requiring completion of investigations if an elected member stands down.
- A new disqualification criterion for any elected member subject to the maximum period of suspension more than once within 5 years.
- The creation of a new national appeals function.

The Monitoring Officer responded to a number of comments and questions including:

- The Standards Committee would meet twice a year going forwards;
- The number of complaints reported were from the past three years. On an annual basis the numbers were fairly low but this could change as the political landscape changed;
- The Monitoring Officer was reviewing the ongoing case and would make a decision in consultation with the Independent person if it was in the public interest to continue due to the amount of time which had elapsed since the original complaint had been submitted. She confirmed that all interested parties were aware of the current position;
- The Monitoring Officer would circulate an LGA briefing note which set out advice clarifying the role of Councillors in their capacity as an elected Member or a private individual;
- Members were advised that the role of the independent person included being consulted by the Council's Monitoring Officer in respect of an allegation against a Member and to provides views to the Monitoring Officer, Standards Committee and/or Council as required under the Council Constitution on complaints where the Code of Conduct might have been breached.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the update report and provide be noted;

2. That the proposed changes to the ‘Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011(2025) in Appendix A be recommended to Council;

3. That the Government’s response to the consultation outcome of Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England dated 11th November 2025 contained in Appendix B be noted.

4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part 1 Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR