

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee was held on Monday 19 January 2026.

PRESENT: Councillors A Romaine (Chair), I Morrish (Vice-Chair), J Thompson, D Branson and J McConnell

OFFICERS: J McNally and A Wilson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors M Saunders, L Hurst and J Rostron

25/13 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

25/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point of the meeting.

25/15 **MINUTES- STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 20 OCTOBER 2025**

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 20 October 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

25/16 **QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Head of Legal Services (People) presented the Quarterly Update Report. The report provided a quarterly update to the Standards Committee regarding the current position concerning Code of Conduct complaints, and to identify any trends or patterns in regard to the type of complaints received.

Members were advised that as of 15 January 2026 there were 14 outstanding complaints from 2025. The Head of Legal Services clarified that the figures detailed in the report showed each separate complaint. In some cases, a number of complaints about the same incident could inflate the total number also complaints against a number of Councillors can again inflate the total number.

Of the 14 outstanding complaints detailed in the report, 3 which had been received in March 2025 were awaiting the outcome of an investigation however the Head of Legal informed the Committee that the 3 'stayed' complaints detailed in the report had now had an outcome of no further action.

The 11 remaining complaints consisted of 1 which was subject to an ongoing internal investigation, 1 was awaiting the appointment of an internal investigator, 3 had been considered/decision made and an outcome would be provided to the subject member and complainants and 6 which were received in late November/2025 were with the Independent Person and Monitoring Officer for consideration on whether to accept or reject and/or the next steps.

Members were advised that the theme of complaints would continue to be monitored to consider whether additional support was required. The Head of Legal stated that no particular themes had been identified for the complaints submitted in the last quarter although social media did play a part. It was advised that advice and guidance on the appropriate use of social media would continue to be provided to Members.

The Head of Legal advised Members that the Code of Conduct section on the Council website would soon be updated to clearly distinguish between complaints relating to Middlesbrough Councillors and those concerning Parish Councillors. The change reflected the fact that Parish Councillors operated under their own Code of Conduct. While the principles of the code were broadly similar, the wording could vary depending on the version adopted by the

Parish Council. The revised complaints forms now included references to the relevant Codes of Conduct enabling complainants to identify and cite the appropriate sections when submitting a complaint.

Members heard that a Governance Solicitor had been successfully appointed and was due to start at the end of January 2026.

The Head of Legal asked the Committee if they found the monthly updates that they are provided with useful and if they wanted to continue to receive them, the Committee agreed that the updates should continue.

The Head of Legal also asked the Committee if there was any specific training in relation to Standards that would be beneficial, a Member suggested Standards Hearing role play would be beneficial as some Members had not attended a hearing previously, the Head of Legal agreed to investigate this training.

A Member queried what the lead time was for outstanding complaints it was advised that it was situation dependant, investigations could be six weeks but could be longer depending on a number of variables.

The Standards Committee agreed:

- To note the content of the report

25/17

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED

None