



Legal and Corporate Services

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 20th April, 2026
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Mandela Room

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Fire Evacuation Procedure

In the event the fire alarm sounds attendees will be advised to evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit and assemble at the Bottle of Notes opposite MIMA.
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of interest.
4. Minutes- Standards Committee - 19 January 2026 3 - 4
5. Quarterly Update Report to Standards Committee 5 - 10
6. Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered

Charlotte Benjamin
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall
Middlesbrough
Friday 10 April 2026

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors A Romaine (Chair), I Morrish (Vice-Chair), M Saunders, J Thompson, D Branson, L Hurst, J McConnell and J Rostron

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Susan Lightwing/Joanne McNally, 01642 728329/01642 729712, Joanne_McNally@middlesbrough.gov.uk; Sue_Lightwing@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	Corporate Director of Legal and Corporate Services - Charlotte Benjamin
Relevant Executive Member:	Mayor Chris Cooke
Submitted to:	Standards Committee
Date:	20 April 2026
Title:	Quarterly Update Report to Standards Committee
Report for:	Information
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Report is for information only
Subject to call in?	Not applicable
Why:	This report is for information to the Standards Committee

Proposed decision(s)

That the Standards Committee

- Notes the content of this report.

Executive summary

This report provides a quarterly update to the Standards Committee regarding the current position concerning Code of Conduct Complaints, and to identify any trends or patterns in the type of complaints being received.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

1.1 To provide information by way of a quarterly update to the Standards Committee regarding the previous years and the current position concerning Code of Conduct Complaints.

1.2 In addition, that the Committee considers the information to discuss possible areas of member development and improvements.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<p>This report supports all the ambitions as Councillors represent local residents, work to develop better services, and deliver local change.</p> <p>The public have high expectations of them and entrust them to represent their local area, taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. There is an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.</p> <p>This report provides the Standards Committee with the information providing the current position to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.</p> <p>Maintaining that confidence will support the delivery of all of the ambitions and the underpinning aims.</p>
A healthy Place	
Safe and resilient communities	
Delivering best value	

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Standards Committee

- Notes the content of this report.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Not applicable as report is for information only.

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 This report is provided to committee members to give an overview of the current, and recent position with regards to the Code of Conduct complaints received.

Year (Jan-Dec)	Total	Member on Member	Other non Member (i.e. member of public / officer)	ONGOING	No. withdrawn/ discontinued due to not re-elected	CONCLUDED				
						No. rejected	No. resolved informally	Accepted – No further action	No. to investigation	No. to standards Committee after investigation
2021	33	13	20	0	7	5	19	0	2	1
2022	12	3	9	0	4	4	2	0	2	2
2023	59	10	49	0	9	30	14	0	6	0
2024	21	7	14	0	0	8	13	0	0	0
2025	37	16	21	4	2	17	10	4	0	0
2026	6	0	6	3	0	2	1	0	0	0

4.2 The shaded columns show the breakdown of the ongoing and complaints outcomes and will add up to the total number for the year.

4.3 An additional column has been added to show those where they have been accepted, but no further action is required. See para 4.7 below for an example.

4.4 The outstanding complaints as at 26th March 2026 are as follows:

Year	Total Number Received	Total Number Ongoing	Number of Cllrs	Number currently 'stayed'
2025	37	4	2	0
2026	6	3	3	0
TOTALS	43	7	5	0

4.5 For clarification, the information shows each separate complaint. In some cases, we may receive a number of complaints in regard to the same incident which can inflate the total number. We may also have the same complaint against a number of Councillors, which can again inflate the total number.

4.6 The 'Stayed' column has been included in the report as per the committee request. This is for any complaints that are awaiting information from external bodies i.e. police/another authority or body.

4.7 There have been 13 complaints concluded since the report to the committee of 14th January 2026 as follows:

10 complaints from 2025:

3 complaints which had been previously stayed awaiting information from external bodies have been concluded by way of No Further Action by the Monitoring Officer, further to consultation with the Independent Person.

6 complaints were rejected the Monitoring Officer, further to consultation with the Independent Person. This related to two separate complaints, but each complaint was in respect of 3 councillors.

1 complaint was accepted and informal advice and guidance given by the Monitoring Officer, further to consultation with the Independent Person.

3 complaints from 2026:

2 were rejected by the Monitoring Officer, further to consultation with the Independent Person.

1 was accepted and informal advice and guidance given by the Monitoring Officer, further to consultation with the Independent Person.

4.8 Of the 7 ongoing complaints:

- The 4 complaints for 2025 are subject to investigation, 2 are internal investigations, 2 are external investigations.
- 1 has been considered by the Independent Person and Monitoring Officer and a decision has been made on whether to accept or reject and/or the next steps. This decision is to be communicated to the Subject Member and Complaint.
- 2 received in March are with the Independent Person/Monitoring Officer for consideration on whether to accept or reject and/or the next steps.

4.9 The theme of complaints will be continued to be monitored to consider what additional support is required. No particular themes have been identified for those complaints submitted in the last quarter.

4.10 It is worth noting that there have not been any member-on-member complaints to date in 2026.

4.11 By way of update further to the last report, we have now appointed a permanent governance solicitor to assist and support in standards matters following a successful growth bid.

4.12 Relevant discussion points:

- **Review of monthly updates**
- **Engagement with training**
 - o Is there any specific training the Committee would like to see for standards issues?

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

6.1 Not applicable as report is for information only.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	There is no financial impact as the report is for information and discussion only.
Legal	There is no legal impact as the report is for information and discussion only.
Risk	The report contributes to the Council demonstrating its approach to monitoring and maintaining standards of behaviour and ethical governance.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	There are no issues affecting human rights, the public sector equality duty or community cohesion.
Reducing Poverty	There is no impact on reducing poverty as the report is for information and discussion only.
Climate Change / Environmental	There is no impact on the Council's climate change or environmental aspirations as the report is for information and discussion only.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	There is no impact on children and young people cared for by the Authority and care leavers as the report is for information and discussion only.
Data Protection	There are no issues of data protection as the report is for information and discussion only.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
None		

Appendices

1	None
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Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
None		

Contact: Ann-Marie Wilson – Head of Legal Services (People)

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