

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 15 October 2025.

PRESENT: Ms G Foster (Chair), Mr R Palmer (Vice Chair), Mr O Bradshaw, Ms S Roots, Mr W Chapman, Mr A Hook and Mr N Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer), Mr T Godfrey (Senior Governance Manager), Ms K Reynolds (Governance Advisor) and Miss R Emberley (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

15. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr Harrison, with Mr Chapman acting as his substitute, Mr Waters, with Mr Bradshaw acting as his substitute and Mr Moreland, with Mr Hook as acting as his substitute.

16. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

There were no Member declarations of interest.

17. Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2025

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2025 were taken as a correct record and a paper copy to be signed by the Chair.

18. Monitoring Officer's Update

(Item 4)

1. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Monitoring Officer, Mr Ben Watts, delivered a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee.
2. The presentation highlighted the following to Members:
 - I. The connection between good governance and the Standards Committee.
 - II. A revision of the key points of the Members' Code of Conduct.
 - III. Emerging Themes.
 - IV. Enforcement and Education.
 - V. Monitoring' Officer's future suggestions for the Committee.

3. In answer to some Member comments and questions, the following was said:
- a) It was confirmed that the Members elected to sit on the Standards Hearing panel consisted of Ms Georgia Foster, Mr Richard Palmer and Mr John Moreland, and so was across two Political Groups.
 - b) The level of complaints against Members had increased compared to similar periods. The ones received were being reviewed. No final determinations had been made but thus far, none were found to have breached the code of conduct. It was drawn to Member's attention that, even with the increase in number, the amount remained less than other local authorities.
 - c) Mr Watts acknowledge that the role of an elected Member was not easy; Members were encouraged to speak to Officers who would provide advice that was independent and in line with the Council's best interests.
 - d) Mr Watts suggested that Members would benefit from having open conversations about agenda items and work programming. It was further suggested that the Committee could create a Standards Working Party Group. Mr Watts clarified that the aims of the Working Party Group would be to discuss topics for Member training and further development, as well as provide reflections on how to raise further awareness of the Members Code of Conduct to all Counsellors and provide regular updates to the Committee.
 - e) Members considered how the suggestions of the Monitoring Officer could be progressed further.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the presentation.