

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, 29th April, 2026**

**2.00 pm**

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,  
Maidstone**







## AGENDA

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Wednesday, 29th April, 2026, at 2.00 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,**  
**Maidstone**

Ask for: **Ruth Emberley**  
Telephone:

#### **Membership (7)**

**Reform UK (4):** Mr W Chapman, Mr M Harrison, Mr R Palmer (Vice Chair),  
and Mr R Waters

**Liberal Democrats (1):** Mr J Moreland

**Conservatives (1):** Mr N Williams

**Restore Britain (1):** Mr R Ford

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

1. Election of Chair of the Committee
2. Apologies and Substitutes
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 (Pages 1 - 2)
5. Standards Regime and Member Complaints Update (Pages 3 - 6)

#### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Benjamin Watts  
Deputy Chief Executive  
03000 416814

**Tuesday, 21 April 2026**



## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### 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.

From: Petra Der Man, Monitoring Officer  
To: Standards Committee, 29 April 2026  
Subject: Standards Regime and Member Complaints: Update  
Status: Unrestricted

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## 1. Introduction

- a) This reports aims to do two things:
  - a. Provide an update on the formal complaints received under the Kent Code of Member Conduct.
  - b. Update Members on other information relevant to the ethical framework of the council.
- b) The complaints process is a confidential one. Individual complaints are therefore not discussed in this report.

## 2. Member Complaints

- a) The appendix sets out the number of complaints received each month starting from 6 May 2025 through to the end of March 2026.
- b) The following headlines can be drawn from the information.
  - a. 85 Member complaints have been received over this 11-month period. This is an average of almost 8 per month.
  - b. October 2025 saw the single largest number of complaints at 18.
  - c. Complaints by Members against other Members make up 40% of all complaints received. This percentage rose to 72% of all complaints received in the first three months of this calendar year.
- c) Of the 85 complaints received during the period of this report:
  - a. 81 (95%) have been closed or resolved informally.
  - b. 4 (5%) remain under review.
- d) Member complaints are not coded by content but a review of those received show that the main areas leading to complaints are:
  - a. Comments made by Members on social media.
  - b. Behaviour in, and comments made during, formal council meetings.
  - c. Use of council resources.

- e) Broadly speaking, these form the three largest areas of complaint whether the complainants are other elected KCC Members or not. It is important to bear in mind that a single complaint can contain more than one component or theme.

### **3. Updates**

- a) On 1 March 2026, the new Independent Person, Michael Turner, started in the role. The Independent Person is there to provide advice and most importantly objectivity at any stage where complaints are being handled.
- b) In order to provide resilience, the intention is to recruit a second Independent Person in due course.
- c) Following a public consultation, the government announced plans to introduce significant changes to the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England. This was announced on 11 November 2025<sup>1</sup>. A link to this is available at the end of this report.
- d) When there is a clear timetable for the introduction of any changes, this Committee will be informed and plans made to update the code of conduct as necessary.

### **4. Recommendation**

The Standards Committee is asked to discuss the report and make recommendations as to what actions could be taken to reduce the number of Member complaints.

### **5. Background Documents**

None.

### **6. Report Author and Relevant Director**

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<sup>1</sup> [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)

## Appendix – Member Complaints 6 May 2025 to 31 March 2026

<b>Complaints received</b>	<b>Complainant</b>		<b>Complaints received</b>
<b>Month</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Non-Member</b>	<b>Total</b>
May 2025	0	0	0
June 2025	0	0	0
July 2025	1	6	7
August 2025	0	3	3
September 2025	6	9	15
October 2025	2	16	18
November 2025	0	3	3
December 2025	4	6	10
January 2026	1	2	3
February 2026	6	4	10
March 2026	14	2	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>34 (40%)</b>	<b>51 (60%)</b>	<b>85</b>

Please note that the number of complaints refers to the number of individual complaints. It does not refer to the number of individual instances. A single alleged breach can result in more than one complaint from more than one person, and/or complaints about more than one Member at the same time.

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