

Contact Officer: Yolande Myers

KIRKLEES COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 24th September 2025

Present: Councillor Bill Armer (Chair)
Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Cathy Scott
Councillor Mohan Sokhal

In attendance: Michael Stow (Independent Person)

Apologies: Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Imran Safdar
Craig Ainsworth (Independent Person)

3 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Bolt, Munro and Safdar and Craig Ainsworth (Independent Person).

4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meetings held on 12 March and 21 May 2025 be approved as a correct record.

5 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

6 Admission of the Public

It was noted that all items would be considered in public session.

7 Deputation/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

8 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

9 Cases and News Update

The Committee received a report providing an update on recent developments in local government ethics and standards cases since the last meeting in March 2025. Several notable cases had been reported in the Local Government Lawyer, including a finding of improper influence by a planning committee member at King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, and a councillor in Tameside found in breach of the code following social media comments. The report also referenced a case in Durham where a newly elected councillor had to step down due to being an employee of the authority, and a former councillor referred to the police for failing to

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declare a disclosable pecuniary interest. Additionally, the committee noted the outcome of the trial of former councillor Ricky Jones, who was acquitted of encouraging violent disorder.

The report also summarised recent published decisions from standards bodies across the UK. The Standards Commission for Scotland had considered six cases, with breaches found in five, resulting in suspensions or censures. In Northern Ireland, two cases were heard, both resulting in suspensions. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales investigated 13 cases, none of which were upheld. The Committee was also updated on the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), including its March 2025 report on early warning signs in public sector bodies and its June 2025 annual report, which revisited the 2019 review of local government ethical standards. No feedback had yet been published on the government's consultation on local standards and conduct.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10 **Code of Conduct Complaints Update**

The Committee received an update from the Monitoring Officer on complaints made under the Members' Code of Conduct between 1 March and 31 August 2025. The Committee was informed that 11 complaints had been received during this period, 10 of which related to Kirklees Councillors and one to a Town or Parish Councillor. Of these, two were not pursued, four were not progressed beyond initial assessment, one was resolved informally, and one resulted in a finding of breach. Three complaints remained under investigation at the time of reporting. The Committee also noted that of the nine complaints carried forward from the previous reporting period, five resulted in findings of breach, three were dismissed at the initial stage, and one was resolved informally.

A comparison with the previous reporting period revealed a significant decrease in the number of complaints, from 22 to 11, continuing a downward trend. The nature of the complaints in the current period primarily concerned social media conduct, correspondence, and failure to comply with previous sanctions. It was noted that most complaints were submitted by members of the public, with only one from an officer and none from councillors. The committee was also updated on published decisions, which now only include upheld complaints. The Committee acknowledged the potential influence of the absence of elections in 2025 on the reduced volume of complaints.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.