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KIRKLEES COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 18th March 2026

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

In attendance: Michael Stow (Independent Person)

Apologies: Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor Alison Munro
Councillor Cathy Scott
Craig Ainsworth (Independent Person)

11 Membership of the Committee

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

12 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

13 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

14 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public session.

15 Deputation/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

16 Code of Conduct complaints update

The Committee received a report which provided an update on Code of Conduct complaints that had been submitted since the previous meeting in September 2025. The current period under review showed a total of 11 complaints, with 5 complaints relating to Kirklees Councillors and 6 complaints relating to Town or Parish Councillors. A total of 3 Kirklees members and 7 Town or Parish Council members had been the subject of complaints in this period. The report and appendices outlined the detail regarding the nature of the allegations, any preliminary assessments that had taken place, and the outcomes or actions that had followed where cases had progressed.

Members noted the pattern of complaints reported and the themes that had emerged. In terms of any discernible trends, the numbers of complaints being made

in respect of Kirklees Councillors had fallen, whereas there had been a sharp increase in the complaints relating to Town and Parish Councils. Therefore, whilst the overall number of complaints remained the same, the make up of those complaints had shifted towards Town and Parish Councils. It was acknowledged that the monitoring of complaints provided valuable insight into areas where training, clarification or further support for councillors might be beneficial.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

17 Cases and News Update

The Committee received a report summarising recent national developments in local government standards, case law and investigation outcomes. Members noted the continuing rise in complex conduct issues being reported across the sector, and the report's reflected on several high-profile cases that illustrated the challenges authorities face in maintaining public confidence. The report addressed the significant strain that large volumes of complaints could place on council resources, as well as the risks posed by prolonged, unresolved disputes to the effective functioning of local governance.

The Committee noted the emphasis placed on promoting constructive and preventative measures among councils, including the use of mediation, training and broader governance reviews. These approaches were acknowledged as increasingly important in reducing dependency on formal complaints processes and encouraging early intervention to prevent escalation.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

18 Update on Government Consultation 'Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England'

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Government's consultation on proposals to strengthen the standards and conduct framework for local authorities. Members were reminded of the background to the consultation, including the Government's intention to improve ethical governance arrangements nationally and to ensure councils had clearer, more consistent tools for addressing misconduct. The Committee noted the drivers behind the proposals, including the desire to reinforce accountability, raise behavioural expectations, and improve transparency across the sector.

The Committee discussed potential areas where changes may be required within the Council, particularly regarding the need to review existing procedures once the Government's final proposals were confirmed. Members recognised the importance of preparing for possible updates to local processes covering investigations, sanctions, reporting and support for councillors. The report indicated that councils may need to strengthen training provision and ensure that mechanisms for promoting good conduct remain robust, accessible and aligned with national expectations.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.