

27 February 2026

Our Ref Standards Committee 11 March 2026
Contact. Committee Services
Direct Dial. (01462) 474655
Email. committee.services@north-herts.gov.uk

To: The Chair and Members of the Standards Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council

District Councillors Vijaiya Poopalasingham (Chair), Ian Albert (Vice-Chair),
Val Bryant, Elizabeth Dennis, Dominic Griffiths,
Keith Hoskins, Chris Lucas, Ian Mantle,
Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Sean Nolan and
Sean Prendergast

(Substitutes: Councillors Sam Collins, Emma Fernandes, Tim Johnson, Paul Ward,
Donna Wright, Joe Graziano, Nigel Mason, Claire Strong,
Lisa Nash and Laura Williams)

Parish Councillors Parish Councillor Rebecca Elliott and Parish Councillor
Martin Griffin (Co-opted non-voting Members)

Independent Persons Nicholas Moss OBE (Independent Person), Patrick Hodson
and Joel Rogers (Reserve – Independent Person) –
advisory roles

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF**

On

WEDNESDAY, 11TH MARCH, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Isabelle Alajooz
Director – Governance

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda **Part I**

Item	Page
<p>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Members are required to notify any substitutions by midday on the day of the meeting.</p> <p>Late substitutions will not be accepted and Members attending as a substitute without having given the due notice will not be able to take part in the meeting.</p>	
<p>2. MINUTES - 22 OCTOBER 2025 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 22 October 2025.</p>	(Pages 5 - 10)
<p>3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chair of other business which they wish to be discussed at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>The Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.</p>	
<p>4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.</p>	
<p>5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.</p>	
<p>6. STANDARDS MATTERS REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – GOVERNANCE</p> <p>The report updates Members of the Committee on standards issues locally and nationally. It contains a summary of the complaints received for the year 2025-2026 thus far, as well as any other relevant issues that have arisen between Committee meetings.</p>	(Pages 11 - 18)

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON WEDNESDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 2025 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Ian Albert (Chair), Keith Hoskins, Ian Mantle, Ralph Muncer, Sean Nolan, Sean Prendergast and Paul Ward*

Parish Councillors: Parish Councillor Rebecca Elliot and Parish Councillor Martin Griffin, non-voting advisory roles.

Nicholas Moss OBE (Independent Person), non-voting advisory role.

In Attendance: *Isabelle Alajooz (Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

Also Present:

There were no members of the public present for the duration of the meeting.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 00 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Vijaiya Poopalasingham, Chris Lucas, Caroline McDonnell, Dominic Griffiths and Val Bryant.

Having given due notice, Councillor Paul Ward substituted for Councillor Lucas.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis was absent.

2 MINUTES - 5 MARCH 2025

Audio Recording – 1 minutes 25 seconds

The Independent Person noted that the attendees included Ms Wai Bing Hui, who was not present at the previous meeting, and should instead have been Mr Patrick Hodson. There was also a typo in response to a question, which should read 'struck' instead of 'stuck'.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Chair, proposed the Minutes with the above amendments and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 5 March 2025, as amended, be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 01 seconds

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 03 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council policy this meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (3) The Chair advised for the purpose of clarification Clause 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution does not apply to this meeting.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 3 minutes 46 seconds

There was no public participation.

6 STANDARDS MATTERS REPORT

Audio recording – 3 minutes 51 seconds

The Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled 'Standards Matters Report' and advised that:

- Since publication of the report, there had been 5 further complaints received regarding Councillors. This reflected a sector-wide trend, with more public awareness of the standards regimes in place and less tolerance for poor behaviour.
- The Complaints Handling Procedure was clear in how complaints were processed. Once the complaint was received, this would be assessed against the Code of Conduct and procedures. This would also involve potentially meeting with the complainant and the subject and review of any relevant correspondence and paperwork. The outcome of this investigation stage would then be shared with the Independent Person to assess the validity of the complaint.
- All complaints received were logged on a spreadsheet for auditing purposes, including the actions taken, or why a complaint was not taken forward. These were then reported to the Standards Committee.
- It was important that the complaints procedure at the Council was robust, credible and defensible.
- The English Devolution Bill would not automatically change the Code of Conduct for Councillors but would emphasise the need for accountability and ensuring framework was in place to deal with complaints effectively.
- There was a Monitoring Officer protocol for consideration at this meeting, which would be referred onto Full Council for consideration before adoption into the Constitution.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Paul Ward

In response to questions, the Monitoring Officer advised that:

- If a complaint was regarding an Officer, it would not be reported to this Committee, but would be dealt with by the line manager and HR.

- There were processes in place, as outlined under the 3Cs policy, for members of the public to make complaints about Officers, and ultimately the Local Government Ombudsman.
- When a complaint was received, it would be triaged by the Monitoring Officer. If further information was required, then this would be sought from the complainant through email, calls and written letters. Should no response be received to these requests, then the complainant would receive a warning that the case would be closed without further detail.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the content of the report and made suggestions on future actions.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure good governance within the Council and keep the Committee abreast of changes locally and nationally.

7 ADOPTION OF UPDATED GUIDANCE TO COUNCILLORS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Audio recording – 10 minutes 47 seconds

The Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled 'Adoption of Updated Guidance to Councillor on Outside Bodies' and advised that:

- The guidance document would provide clear and practical guidance to Members appointed to Outside Bodies, including expectations, liabilities and responsibilities.
- The previous guidance was updated in 2016 and therefore this update was required to bring the guidance in line with current practices, especially given the increase in partnership working.
- There was no change to the overall principles of the previous guidance, but it simplified the information to make it easier for Members to understand their responsibilities as appointees on Outside Bodies.
- If approved at Full Council, the guidance would be circulated to all Members and would be included within the Constitution.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Sean Nolan
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Ian Mantle

In response to questions, the Monitoring Officer advised that:

- Training could be provided on this as part of the next Code of Conduct training session for Members. This would help to understand requirements of any specific appointment, but the guidance document included practical examples to simplify the overall process for Members.
- Members should contact the Monitoring Officer with any specific questions on interests related to Outside Body appointments.
- If there was a potential conflict identified, then this would be addressed with the Member. It was important that Members understood when they were able, or not able, to take part in Council business related to Outside Bodies.
- The guidance would apply to appointees of charities and charitable organisations, and this was detailed in the document.

- Information regarding the position of the appointed Member on an Outside Body could be included within the paperwork completed ahead of the Annual Council meeting.

The Independent Person noted that he commended the document for adoption and that it would support with the assessment of complaints received and understanding any potential conflict of interests.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL: That Full Council approve and adopt the updated guidance for Councillors.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL:

- (1) The Council's current guidance to Councillors on Outside Bodies was last updated in 2016.
- (2) A full review of the guidance to Councillors on outside bodies has been necessary to ensure:
 - a. Councillors are aware of their liabilities based on the type of organisation which they are appointed to and the risks associated with these appointments both to the Councillor and the Council.
 - b. That the guidance available to Councillors aligns with the updated statutory position and also best practice.

8 ADOPTION OF THE MONITORING OFFICER PROTOCOL

Audio recording – 20 minutes 06 seconds

The Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled 'Adoption of the Monitoring Officer Protocol' and advised that:

- In recent years there had been more of an emphasis placed on ethical conduct, and this document sought to formalise how this worked at North Herts Council and outlined how the roles can be carried out effectively and independently.
- It would help to ensure that the role of the Monitoring Officer was understood by all, including Members, Officers and the public, and would embed the 'Golden Triangle' of roles within the Constitution.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Ian Albert

In response to questions, the Monitoring Officer advised that:

- The term 'reportable instances' related to something which was reportable to the Monitoring Officer, which would cover Councillor Complaints, as well as other areas such as whistleblowing and safeguarding.
- If a complaint was received in relation to a politically charged matter, it may be best to refer the matter out to a neighbouring authority to ensure that there was a level of independence in the assessment of the complaint. This was allowed under the Complaints Handling Procedure.

- The Monitoring Officer role was appointed under the 1989 Act and the role was required to ensure all decisions of the Council were made lawfully. The Monitoring Officer should review and approve all decisions before being taken and no other Officer is able to do that within their role. Therefore, the Monitoring Officer role was described as 'front and centre' so that colleagues understood the oversight role of the Monitoring Officer within the decision making process of the Council.
- There were clear examples from other authorities where the role of the Monitoring Officer in decision making was unclear and the consequences this can have on the authority.
- The Monitoring Officer was not required to have oversight of decisions taken at Parish level.
- However, the Monitoring Officer was responsible for complaints made against Parish Councillors. The Complaints Handling Procedure outlined the need to assess and investigate complaints relating to Parish Councillors, and whilst a local resolution would be sought in the first instance, if this was not possible the normal criteria would apply for assessing these complaints.
- Should a complaint be received against a Parish clerk, this would be an employee matter as the clerk is not an elected position and therefore not covered by the Code of Conduct, and the Monitoring Officer would not be involved in these matters.
- The adoption of this Protocol into the Constitution would be for Full Council to consider and approve before formal incorporation.

As part of the debate, Councillor Ralph Muncer suggested that additional clarity should be added to make it clear what a 'reportable incident' was and that examples of when neighbouring authorities may be required to assist in assessments of complaints received should be included in the Protocol document.

Ahead of the vote, the Independent Person noted that there were small errors on pages 41 and 42 of the reports pack, including that complaints would be assessed prior to any investigation and reference to the Independent Member, rather than Independent Person.

In response to points raised, the Monitoring Officer thanked Members for their comments and suggestions to help ensure this was appropriate for both Members and Officers to understand. These amendments could be incorporated into the updated report which would be presented to Full Council, alongside the referral from this meeting.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the guidance attached at Appendix 2 titled 'The Golden Triangle: Governance Roles and Responsibilities'.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL: That Full Council approve and adopt the Monitoring Officer Protocol into the Constitution, subject to the comments and changes put forward by the Standards Committee.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) The role of the Monitoring Officer has expanded over recent years. Monitoring Officers are also required to act as consultants to anyone within the Council on matters of legality, maladministration, and impropriety.
- (2) It is therefore considered that it would be good practice for the Council to introduce an appropriate Protocol.

Wednesday, 22nd October, 2025

- (3) In August 2025, Lawyers in Local Government (LLG), the Chartered Institute for Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers (SOLACE) collaborated to produce a new guide: 'The Golden Triangle: Governance Roles and Responsibilities' (attached at Appendix 2). Members are invited to give consideration to this guidance to enhance their overall understanding of the interwoven nature of the roles of the three statutory officers within the Council.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm

Chair

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

DATE: 11 March 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: STANDARDS MATTERS REPORT

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR: GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING OFFICER

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The report updates Members of the Committee on standards issues locally and nationally. It contains a summary of the complaints received for the year 2025-2026 thus far, as well as any other relevant issues that have arisen between Committee meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee

2.1. notes the content of the report and makes any suggestions on future actions.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To ensure good governance within the Council and keep the Committee abreast of changes locally and nationally.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 Group Leaders and the Standards Committee Chair are kept informed of Monitoring Officer and standards matters during regular briefing sessions throughout the year. The Monitoring Officer also holds quarterly meetings with the Independent Person, Reserve Independent Persons (together referred to as 'IPs') and the Chair and Vice Chair of Committee. Any relevant standards matter comments from the IPs meetings are part of the regular briefings with Group Leaders.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on an Executive key decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 Within its terms of reference the Standards Committee has a function "*to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority*". The Committee will therefore receive update reports from the Monitoring Officer on matters that relate to, or assist with, areas of Member conduct.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Local

North Hertfordshire complaints/ issues update

Complaints:

- 8.1 The complaints reported below, are complaints and recommendations that have a) been concluded and/ or b) received, since the beginning of the year, 2025.
- 8.2 During the calendar year of January 2025 – to date, 20 complaints / issues have been received.
- 8.3 As per normal practice a summary of the complaints and decisions are provided for the year commencing January 2025, to date. This reporting below is compliant with the Committee on Standards in Public Life ('CSPL') good practice recommendations. Note, where the decision at assessment stage is informal action – the Councillors have not been named. Complaints are treated as confidential, in so far as complainant and the Councillor subject to the complaint is concerned, unless they have reached what will generally be a public stage of the Procedure (i.e. Sub-Committee hearing). Decision outcomes are, however, reported through to the local council Parish/Town/ Community (Clerk and Chair or alternative as appropriate) and relevant Group Leader (or alternative as appropriate). The complaints are as follows – RAG colour coding denotes those completed – Green, with ongoing Orange and outstanding Red:

Complaint about: Parish/Town or District Councillor	Basic summary of complaint	Action <i>NB Independent Person/ R Independent Person involved in all stages of these complaints.</i>
1/2025 complaint in respect of District Councillor.	Breach of Code of Conduct at Council meeting 23.1.25	No breach of the Code of Conduct, therefore no further action.
2/2025 issue raised in respect of a District Councillor.	Comments at a Council meeting regarding officers.	Apology provided at the next meeting by the Councillor; no further action.
3/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor.	Handling of leadership restructure agenda item at council meeting	No breach of the code, no further action, the independent person also agreed with this decision.
3B/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor.	Comments uploaded to social media that could cause offence and concerning County Election	Dealt with by the Returning Officer directly with the councillor's agent and the group leader.
4/2025 issue raised regarding a councillor	Issue was regarding campaign literature, not really a complaint more so to make the monitoring officer aware	No further action.
5/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor.	Alleged bullying, unacceptable behaviour in meetings and via correspondence	Determined to be party political business not the Council's, no further action.
6/2025 complaint from a member of the public regarding a councillor	Alleged bullying as well as a safeguarding issue raised.	Matter was closed due to no further information provided.
7/2025 complaint from a member of the public regarding a councillor	Alleged bullying as well as a safeguarding issue raised.	Matter was closed due to no further information provided.

8/2025 complaint from a member of the public regarding a Town councillor.	Complaint relating to a post uploaded to Facebook.	Matter was closed due to no further information provided.
9/2025 complaint from a member of the public regarding a councillor	Alleged safeguarding incident.	Email sent requesting further information and email sent to the councillor advising them to inform their party of the incident. No further action
10/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor	Alleged bullying, harassment.	No breach of the code, no further action, the independent person also agreed with this decision.
11/2025 complaint from a member of the public regarding three councillors	Alleged predetermination of a planning application as well as failing to declare interests.	Decision made that the complaint warrants no further action.
12/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding other councillors	Alleged inappropriate conduct at a Council meeting.	Complaint withdrawn, no further action.
13/2025 complaint from a member of the public regarding three councillors	Alleged bullying.	No breach of the code, no further action.
14/2025 complaint from member of the public regarding a councillor	Alleged inappropriate behaviour at a Council meeting.	No breach of the code, no further action.
15/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor	Complaint regarding failure to challenge hostile behaviour and sharing private information without consent.	No breach of the code, no further action.
16/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor	Alleged inappropriate behaviour.	No breach of the code, no further action.
17/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor	Alleged false accusations against another councillor.	No breach of the code, no further action.
18/2025 complaint from a councillor regarding 2 other councillors	Alleged inappropriate behaviour during a full Council meeting.	Informal recommendation – apology.
19/2025 complaint from a member of the public regarding a Parish councillor	Alleged inappropriate wording by a Parish councillor during a meeting.	Informal recommendation – apology.
1/2026 complaint from a councillor regarding another councillor	Alleged inappropriate comments made during a Council meeting.	Ongoing

Councillor training North Herts District Councillors

8.4 As part of the North Herts Council Councillor’s Code of Conduct, it is necessary for Councillors to attend compulsory training provided by the authority. It is understood that Councillors are busy and relevant officers will use their best endeavours to accommodate training flexibly, including the use of e-Learning modules where appropriate. In return, Councillors are encouraged to attend and participate in any session to meet these requirements.

National Developments

8.5 In the last twelve months, there have been further national developments in the Government’s wider local government and devolution agenda. The English Devolution and Community

Empowerment Bill, introduced to Parliament in July 2025¹, seeks to strengthen local leadership and accountability through enhanced local powers, new governance arrangements for combined and unitary authorities, and provisions for neighbourhood governance.

- 8.6 The Bill focuses on structural reform and devolution rather than councillor conduct or ethical standards matters. However, explanatory material issued by DLUHC and commentary from the Local Government Association (LGA)² emphasise the continuing importance of transparency, accountability and strong local governance frameworks, particularly during any reorganisation or governance change.
- 8.7 On 11 November 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the results of its consultation on proposals to strengthen the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England.

Proposed Core Reforms

- 8.8 MHCLG has confirmed that it intends to move forward with several key changes:

1. Introduction of a mandatory national Code of Conduct

MHCLG plans to bring forward legislation enabling it to establish a compulsory code, set out in regulations, which would apply across all councils and all categories of members, including co-opted members.

2. Requirement for formal Standards Committees with clearer roles

Principal authorities will be required to formally establish a standards committee (or an appropriate sub-committee) responsible for handling standards matters.

3. Increased transparency through publication of outcomes

Authorities would only publish information about allegations once:

- i. a full investigation has been completed, and
- ii. a standards committee has reached a decision on whether the allegation is upheld and what sanction, if any, applies.

This is intended to avoid publicising allegations before investigations are concluded.

4. Investigations must continue even if the member resigns

Subject to legal limitations, investigations would be expected to proceed to completion even if the councillor steps down. MHCLG also proposes that outcomes should be published in all cases, including findings of “no case to answer.”

5. Greater support for complainants and those affected by misconduct

MHCLG highlights that the current system gives little recognition to complainants or victims. Proposed best practice guidance will include measures for supporting individuals through the process, and MHCLG will explore establishing an independent, confidential helpline for complainants.

Proposed New Sanctions

- 8.9 MHCLG is also considering introducing additional sanctions, including:

1. Suspension and related measures

Legislation is proposed to allow councils to suspend members for up to six months for serious breaches. Additional sanctions could include withholding allowances and

¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - GOV.UK](#)

² [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - LGA policy summary | Local Government Association](#)

restricting access to council premises or facilities, either during suspension or as separate penalties.

2. Interim suspensions for the most serious cases

Interim suspension powers would be available where allegations involve serious criminal matters under police investigation or awaiting sentencing. Grounds would include seriousness, risk of harm (including safeguarding risks), and the initial suspension would be limited to three months, subject to review.

3. Disqualification for repeated serious misconduct

If a councillor or co-optee receives the maximum six-month suspension twice within a five-year period, MHCLG proposes that they could be disqualified.

Appeals and Review Rights

8.10 Local and national appeal mechanisms

Currently, the only route for challenge is to complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, who considers only procedural issues. Under the new proposals, a two-stage challenge process would be introduced:

- i. an initial local “right for review”, followed by
- ii. access to a new national appeals body.

- 8.11 The national body would hear appeals from councillors against suspensions or loss of allowances and appeals from complainants who believe their case was mishandled, but only once the local review process has been completed.

Likely Impact on Councils

- 8.12 If implemented, the reforms are expected to significantly reshape how standards matters are handled:
- i. Standards processes may take on a more formal, quasi-judicial character.
 - ii. Complaint numbers may rise, especially if the system becomes more accessible and complainant-focused.
 - iii. The built-in review and appeal stages are likely to lengthen overall case timelines.
- 8.13 The introduction of more meaningful sanctions, including suspension and potential disqualification, may influence member behaviour.
- 8.14 Disqualification would trigger a by-election, which could influence political control in councils with a narrow majority.

Implementation Timescale

- 8.15 MHCLG has indicated that it intends to bring forward the required legislation “as soon as parliamentary time allows.”

Local Developments

- 8.16 Monitoring Officers across Hertfordshire continue to meet regularly through the countywide Governance and Monitoring Officers’ Network, sharing best practice on complaint handling, training and constitutional updates to promote consistency and readiness for any future structural change flowing from the Bill.
- 8.17 Locally, the Council has strengthened its own arrangements:

- The Standards Committee approved and recommended to Full Council the endorsement and adoption of the Monitoring Officer Protocol as part of our measures to further strengthen our internal governance framework. Full Council voted in favour to adopt the Monitoring Officer Protocol on the 28th January 2026³;

- The Standards Committee approved and recommended to Full Council the endorsement of the adoption of Guidance to Councillors on Outside Bodies⁴ as part of our measures to empower Councillors so that they are equipped with knowledge and information regarding their liabilities based on the type of organisation which they are appointed to and the risks associated with these appointments both to the Councillor and the Council;

- Member induction and refresher ethics training remain mandatory for all councillors; and

- The complaints procedure is kept under review to ensure consistency with the LGA Model Code and to encourage proportional and informal resolution where appropriate.

8.18 Officers will continue to monitor legislative and policy developments, report any confirmed changes to the national standards framework, and update local arrangements accordingly.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The terms of reference of the Standards Committee include, at paragraph 7.5.1 of their terms of reference *“to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co- Opted Members of the authority”*.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no capital or revenue implications arising from this report at this stage.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

11.2 Appropriate policy frameworks help to ensure good governance of the Council and therefore reduce risk of poor practice or unsafe decision making.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 Good governance and high ethical standards of conduct ensure that local government decisions are taken in the public interest.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report as this is not a procurement or contract.

³ [6B Adoption of the Monitoring Officer Protocol - referral from Standards.pdf](#)

⁴ [6A Adoption of Updated Guidance to Councillors on Outside Bodies - referral from Standards.pdf](#)

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no financial implications to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 None other than again highlighting the ongoing resource implications for the complaints received.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Isabelle Alajooz Service Director: Governance & Monitoring Officer
isabelle.alajooz@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None other than those referred to/ linked above.

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