

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNOH
ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF
ON WEDNESDAY, 14TH OCTOBER, 2026 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Vijaiya Poopalasingham (Chair), Val Bryant, Jon Clayden, Elizabeth Dennis, Keith Hoskins, Bryony May, Sean Nolan, Sean Prendergast and Alistair Willoughby*

Parish Councillors Rebecca Elliott, non-voting advisory role and Martin Griffin, non-voting advisory role.

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

In Attendance: *Isabelle Alajooz (Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer), Luca Benedito (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Phelia McFarlane (Democratic Services Apprentice)*

Also Present : *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 3 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 0 minutes 57 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Ward, Ian Albert and Sadie Billing.

Having given due notice Councillor Jon Clayden substituted for Councillor Ward, Councillor Alistair Willoughby substituted for Councillor Albert and Councillor Keith Hoskins substituted resulting from the resignation of Tina Bhartwas.

Councillor Ralph Muncer and Councillor Dominic Griffiths were absent.

2 MINUTES - 11 MARCH 2026

Audio Recording – 01 minute 41 seconds

Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Sean Nolan seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 11 March 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 02 minutes 06 seconds

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 02 minutes 11 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 – 02 minutes 48 seconds

There was no public participation.

6 STANDARDS MATTERS

Audio recording – 02 minutes 53 seconds

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

- Since the last meeting the Council had only received two complaints, which were both from members of public, and both were found not to be a breach.
- No Councillor-on-Councillor complaints had been received since the last meeting.
- Issues were being addressed early and informally. However, the formal process was still available when needed or when informal engagement was not forthcoming.
- There appeared to be a shift in culture, which was positive.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sean Nolan
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Bryony May

In response to questions, the Monitoring Officer advised that:

- The Constitutional Review Group was nearing completion, following which consideration would be given to any necessary amendments to the Complaints Handling Procedure.
- The training had helped Members understand the complaints assessment process and the high threshold required to establish a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- The training had explained the steps officers were required to undertake when assessing complaints.
- Regular meetings with the Leader and Shadow Group Leaders had further reinforced the importance of resolving issues informally where appropriate.
- Members of public remained entitled to submit complaints where they believed conduct of a Councillor might have been breached the Code of Conduct. There was no specific explanation for the reduction that was identified.
- Heads of Legal had shared complaints handling, whistleblowing and governance procedures to compare approaches and identify good practice. Collaborative work across Hertfordshire would continue despite the pause in Local Government Reorganisation, with the aim of promoting consistency between authorities.

Wednesday, 14th October, 2026

- Work had been undertaken to explore the development of a model constitution that could be adapted by individual authorities.
- Parish and Town Council Members were invited to undertake training, which was also available through Grow Zone. The role of Parish and Town Council clerks in supporting informal resolution was acknowledged.

Councillor Vijaya Poopalasingham, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote, it was:

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

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

The meeting closed at 7.46 pm

Chair