

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
22 OCTOBER 2025

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: STANDARDS MATTERS REPORT

REPORT OF: 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 thus far, as well as any other relevant issues that have arisen between Committee meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Committee 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 is kept informed of Monitoring Officer and standards matters issues during briefing sessions. The Monitoring Officer also holds quarterly meetings with the Independent Person, Reserve Independent Persons ('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 – October 2025, **11** 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.

Complaints Handling Procedure - updated:

- 8.4 This was last updated in June 2024. As the English Devolution White Paper has been published and there are proposed changes to the regime, no amendments to the Procedure are proposed at this stage.

Councillor training North Herts District Councillors

- 8.5 All District Councillors undertook training in October 2024. This training was provided as an online course and is available via the Council's Growzone training platform. It is not currently proposed to repeat that training because it remains current, and as there are proposed changes to the regime, further updated training can be provided when any new Code or regime has been enacted.

National and Local Developments

- 8.6 Since the Committee's last report in March 2025¹, 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 2025², seeks to strengthen local leadership and accountability through enhanced local powers, new governance arrangements for combined and unitary authorities, and provisions for neighbourhood governance.
- 8.7 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)³ emphasise the continuing importance of transparency, accountability and strong local governance frameworks, particularly during any reorganisation or governance change.
- 8.8 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.

¹ <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/g3719/Decisions%2005th-Mar-2025%2019.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=2>

² [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - GOV.UK](#)

³ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: LGA policy summary | Local Government Association](#)

8.9 Locally, the Council has strengthened its own arrangements:

- the remit of the Standards Committee was broadened in 2024 to include advising the Council on ethical governance matters prior to submission to Full Council;
- The Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers⁴, developed collaboratively by Solace, CIPFA, and LLG, which provides a framework for the three most senior statutory officers to work effectively within the "Golden Triangle" to advise, implement, and achieve good outcomes for local authorities was presented and endorsed by the Committee in October 2024⁵;
- The Committee will receive a separate report with a recommendation to endorse the Monitoring Officer Protocol as part of our measures to further strengthen our internal governance framework;
- 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.

8.10 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.

⁴ [Code-of-Practice-on-Good-Governance-for-Statutory-Officers-June-2024.pdf](#)

⁵ [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Standards Committee, 23/10/2024 19:30](#)

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.

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
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 None other than those referred to/ linked above.