



STANDARDS AND ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE

7th October 2026 at 9.30 a.m.

Present: Councillor Humphrey (in the Chair)
Councillors K. Batson, Crofts, Goodwin and Russell

Officers in attendance:

- Eve Richardson-Smith (Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Paul Windley (Democratic and Scrutiny Team Manager)
- Rachel Marshall (Executive Member Support Officer)

SA.9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Downes, Emmerson and Swinburn for this meeting

SA.10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

SA.11 MINUTES

The committee received the minutes of its meeting held on 15th July 2026.

Under matters arising, the committee considered two nominations that had been received for co-opted town and parish council representatives. It was recommended that the committee would formally co-opt Councillor Joanne Welham (New Waltham Parish Council) and Councillor Wendy Lamb (Humberston Village Council) to the Standards and Adjudication Committee, subject to approval by Group Leaders. Democratic Services would seek approval from the group leaders and, if in agreement, would then advise all elected members.

With regard to parish council adoption of the Code of Conduct, of the two outstanding, one had confirmed that they had adopted the same as North East Lincolnshire Council and a response was still outstanding from the other council. Mr Windley agreed to liaise with the relevant ward councillors to support follow-up engagement with the remaining parish council.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Standards and Adjudication Committee held on 15th July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

SA.12 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the quarterly complaints update report. This was the first time a detailed data report of this nature had been brought to the Committee.

The report outlined the assessment criteria used to determine whether complaints met the criteria used to determine whether a complaint should be referred for further consideration or investigation. It was noted that a significant number of complaints stem from political disagreements, which did not meet the criteria for further action, and that informal, preventative actions (such as advice and reminders) were often more effective, particularly for new councillors.

Members welcomed the increased volume of data but requested that the presentation table be developed further. It was suggested that future reports track whether multiple complaints relate to a single individual (using anonymous identifiers, e.g., "Councillor A") rather than treating them as isolated, single incidents. This would help the Committee identify recurring behavioural trends.

Members noted that a high proportion of complaints related to social media use. It was suggested that social media complaints be broken down into sub-categories to provide better context.

The Deputy Monitoring officer advised that, rather than the Independent Person attending in person, his comments could be included within future reports. The Committee supported trialling this approach.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified the two-stage assessment process. At the initial stage, the Deputy Monitoring Officer considered whether the complaint contained the essential information required and fell within the Council's jurisdiction. At the second stage, the complaint was assessed against the agreed criteria, including timeliness (including the six-month period specified), public interest, and whether the complaint was a "tit-for-tat" response.

Where the criteria for further consideration were met, the complaint was referred to a member-led Referrals Panel.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the Standards Assessment Criteria had not recently been reviewed and would be reviewed once the proposed legislative framework and associated guidance were sufficiently clear.

The Committee discussed complaints regarding the failure to register interests. The Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified that where a failure was administrative (e.g., a missed deadline or lack of awareness), ordinarily the councillor would be asked to rectify the omission by updating their register promptly. Subject to the nature and circumstances and the applicable assessment criteria, this might be sufficient and no further action might then be necessary.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that briefing notes had been issued to all members and that, in future, the plan was for these to be brought together in one place to make them easier to access and review.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That for future complaints updates, refined tables be included tracking cumulative complaints against anonymous individuals and more specific sub-categorizations of social media issues
3. That regular reminders be sent to Elected Members in respect of proactively reviewing and updating their register of interests.

SA.13 STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

The committee received an update on the government's proposed changes to the Standards and Conduct framework for local authorities, which remained subject to legislation and any associated statutory guidance.

The Committee discussed the ongoing challenges of enforcing standards under the current Localism Act framework, noting the limited range of formal sanctions available under the current statutory framework. The Deputy Monitoring Officer reiterated that national legislative changes were anticipated, but there was currently no set date. The Deputy Monitoring Officer added that she was attending the National Standards Conference being held in November and may obtain further information then with regard to a timeline.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that she was engaging with other Monitoring Officers to share best practice.

Members distinguished between action taken under political-group arrangements and any formal sanction available through the standards framework. The Committee noted that its current statutory powers did not include suspending a councillor from office.

RESOLVED – That the update be received.

SA.14 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the proposed work programme for the Standards and Adjudication Committee for 2026/2027.

The Committee reviewed the forward work programme.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported she would be attending a webinar on the Understanding Public Office Accountability Bill in October and the Annual Standards Conference in November. She would provide the Committee with updates on both events, including any relevant implications for the Council and its members at a future meeting.

Members debated the ongoing challenge of managing social media conduct. It was agreed that social media complaints were inevitable and did not necessarily reflect the overall standards of the council.

RESOLVED - It was agreed that the review of social media guidance and a discussion on how the council could support and promote high standards of conduct among members would be scheduled as a substantive agenda item for the next meeting.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 10:55 a.m.