

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 08 July 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr V Ricketts – Chair

Cllr A Chapmanlaw – Vice-Chair

Present: Cllr R Pattinson-West, Cllr B Nanovo, Cllr G Wright, Cllr P Canavan and Cllr C Rigby

Also in attendance: Paul Cashmore, Independent Person and Cllr S Bull to conduct the election of Chair.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ian Sibley, Cllr Eleanor Connolly and Cllr Sara Armstrong.

2. Substitute Members

Cllr Patrick Canavan substituted for Cllr Connolly and Cllr Chris Rigby substituted for Cllr Armstrong.

3. Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr Vanessa Ricketts be elected as Chair of the Standards Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

The newly elected Chair expressed gratitude for being appointed to the role of Chair of Standards Committee for a third consecutive year. The Chair reaffirmed her commitment to the principles of integrity, fairness, and accountability that underpin the work of the Standards Committee.

In response to recent comments made by a former Committee Member suggesting political bias, the Chair clarified that the Standards Committee operated independently and was non-political in nature. The Chair emphasised that all decisions were guided solely by ethical principles and were overseen by Independent Persons to ensure impartiality.

The Chair noted that many complaints do not reach the Committee stage, as they were assessed and dismissed by the Monitoring Officer for not meeting the necessary criteria. It was highlighted that this process applied to complaints involving the Vice Chair, and that Committee Members were expected to set aside political considerations during deliberations.

The Chair concluded by thanking colleagues for their continued trust and support, and welcomed Cllr Wright to the Committee, expressing a commitment to collaborative working in maintaining public confidence.

4. Election of Vice Chair

Following nominations for Cllr Adrian Chapmanlaw and Cllr Gavin Wright to be elected to the role of Vice Chair, a secret ballot was held, and it was:

RESOLVED that Cllr Adrian Chapmanlaw be elected as Vice Chair of the Standards Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

5. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

6. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Standards Committee of 29 April 2025 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

7. Public Issues

The following Public Statements were received and read out by Mr McKinstry.

Agenda Item 9 - Code Of Conduct Complaints Review

When discussing the following complaints tonight - BCP-199, 203, 205, 207 and 209 - it will be interesting to hear how long the subject councillor(s) were given to comply with the related sanctions; I see that the notification letters went out on 4 June 2025, which was 34 days ago. The Committee may also wish to note that Complaint BCP-209 was upheld in full, and not "partially" as stated on page 29 of tonight's reports pack.

Agenda Item 10 - Review of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure

Regarding the naming of councillors: I can see nothing in the Constitution that prevents this currently, though clarification is overdue because the approach has been inconsistent until now. At this Committee on 12 January 2021, for instance, the councillor in Complaint BCP-027 was named even though he'd been completely exonerated; likewise, in the well-known "cleaning for votes" complaint (BCP-132), the subject councillor was named but not his collaborating colleagues. Where misconduct is proved, naming councillors may have punitive and deterrent effects, and would certainly enlighten the voting public, but only if the Council's website settings are adjusted. At present, search engines aren't picking up Council agenda papers, minutes, registers of interests, or other key documents; and the same would doubtless apply to this Committee's decision notices. I hope this problem can be rectified, as it must be causing inconvenience right across the authority.

8. Annual Report on Code of Conduct Complaints

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report provided a summary of the complaints received and determined which were made against councillors for alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The Standards Committee had a duty to consider an annual report and to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

The Committee discussed the report, including:

- It was highlighted by the Chair that social media still seemed to be a cause of many complaints received.
- In response to a query, the Committee was advised that a breakdown of data was not supplied to parish and town councils due to the low number of complaints.
- The Monitoring Officer highlighted the Community Governance Review and the potential work that may come to Standards Committee depending on its outcome.
- It was highlighted that the low figures in 2023/24 were due to local elections, with a large new cohort of Councillors who attended extensive training.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded and agreed that the Annual Report should be received at Full Council.

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee accepts its Annual Report and Council will note the Annual Report of the Standards Committee.

Voting: Nem. Con.

9. Code of Conduct Complaints - Review

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report provided Members with an update on complaints regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct against councillors received or concluded since the last report to the Committee in April 2025.

The Committee was responsible for maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of BCP Council and the Town and Parish Councils, monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct, and considering the outcome of commissioned independent investigations.

The Committee was advised of an amendment to the report which should show Complaint BCP-209 as being fully upheld.

In response to a query regarding progress on pending complaints, the Committee was advised that Councillors were given 14 days to respond at whichever stage of the complaint as required and this deadline could be extended depending on individual circumstances.

RESOLVED that the outcome of concluded complaints and the progress of those still outstanding be noted.

Voting: Nem. Con.

10. Review of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure

The Monitoring Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Standards Committee was asked to commence a review of the Procedure for the handling of complaints received under the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted examples at Paragraph 5 of the Report of other Local Authorities complaints procedures. The Committee was advised that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had consulted widely on Standards Framework with the possibility of a Standards Complaints Procedure being formalised nationally however there was no indication of when that may happen, and in the interim, the Committee was requested to consider whether BCP's procedure for the handling of complaints was still fit for purpose.

The Chair advised she was conscious of not duplicating any work but felt an interim change could be to publicly name Councillors who had been found in breach of the Code of Conduct, which would hopefully increase compliance to any sanctions.

The Committee discussed potential tweaks to the BCP code of conduct and were advised that, although the MHCLG consultation had ended in February, there had been no further information about the outcome and any proposed changes to date.

The Chair concluded by advising that an informal meeting of the Standards Committee to undertake that review could be arranged, with the proposals coming back to the next meeting. It was confirmed by the Monitoring Officer that any proposed changes could then be directed to full Council for consideration.

The Independent Person was consulted and confirmed he was happy with the proposal.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The Committee undertakes a review of the Complaints Handling Procedure;**
- (b) The Committee will report on the outcome of its review at a future meeting.**

Voting: For - Unanimous

11. Councillor Training Update

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report provided an overview of the training deemed to be essential for all councillors to complete in addition to the Code of Conduct training that all councillors had completed as part of the induction programme.

The report provided a breakdown of the completion records for each councillor, although the names of individual councillors had been removed to protect the Council's interests. The Committee was advised that this would form the baseline for future updates.

The Committee discussed the report, including:

- In response to a query from the Chair, the Committee was advised that the data up to 1 July 2025, showed that 18 Councillors had not completed any meta compliance training and 6 Councillors had not completed any of the Skillgate training.
- In response to a statement regarding ensuring all members of the Standards Committee kept fully up to date with all training, the Committee was advised that whilst the training was not currently mandatory, it was classified as essential for all Councillors.
- The Committee continued to discuss the report, the potential impact of non-completion of modules together with ways in which Councillors could be mandated to complete all necessary training, including making training records available as a public record.
- The Chair invited a Councillor, who was not on the Standards Committee, to give his personal experience of trying to access the training modules and the Committee was advised that he found the current format very difficult to access and digest as he was neurodivergent. The Councillor requested that the Committee be compassionate and inclusive when thinking of mandating the training in its current format.
- In response to a query from the Chair, the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that Paragraph 21 of the report detailed the need to be mindful of additional support needs of Councillors and to ensure reasonable adjustments, on an individual basis, were in place to assist those who required support.

- The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised he would take the feedback from the Councillor to the training and development team to inform future training methods for those who required additional support.

Following the discussion, it was proposed and seconded to add an (e) to the Recommendation: that Members of Standards Committee should have a 100% completion record of the mandatory training.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the training completion records be noted as a baseline for future annual reporting;**
- (b) all councillors be sent a quarterly update on their individual performance;**
- (c) political group leaders be sent a quarterly report on the progress of their members performance with a request to encourage uptake;**
- (d) the training modules deemed as mandatory for employees be designated as mandatory for councillors.**
- (e) Members of Standards Committee should have a 100% completion record of the mandatory training.**

Voting: For - Unanimous

12. Work Plan

The Committee considered its Work Plan.

The Monitoring Officer advised of the need to update the date of the Review of Code of Conducts Complaint Procedure to 7 October 2025, which would follow an informal review meeting of the Committee and Independent Persons. The Annual Plan was also highlighted for update to be considered at the end of the 2025/26 municipal year.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted that the Council was halfway through its administration and offered a refresher on code of conduct training and it was suggested that an invite be extended to all Councillors.

RESOLVED that refresher code of conduct training be added to the Work Plan with an invitation to all Councillors.

Voting: For - Unanimous

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm

CHAIR