

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2026 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr R Pattinson-West – Vice-Chair, in the Chair

Present: Cllr M Andrews, Cllr B Chick, Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr R Pattinson-West (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Cllr B Nanovo and Cllr G Wright

Also in attendance: Ian Sibley and Paul Cashmore, Independent Persons (virtually)
Cllr L Dedman, Chair of the Council, to preside over the election of Vice Chair

22. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Vanessa Ricketts.

23. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members on this occasion.

24. Election of Vice-Chair

It was proposed and seconded that Cllr Rachel Pattinson-West be elected as Vice Chair for the remainder of the 2026/26 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that Cllr Rachel Pattinson-West be elected as Vice Chair of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

The newly elected Vice Chair presided over the remainder of the meeting.

25. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

26. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 October 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Vice Chair in the Chair.

27. Public Issues

Three public questions were received from Mr McKinstry as follows:

In relation to Agenda Item 8 - Code of Conduct Complaints Update:

Question 1

The report for Item 8 is described in the agenda as "an update on complaints regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct ... received or concluded since the last report to the Committee in October 2025." However, it appears that fifteen complaints have been excluded from tonight's round-up. This is apparent from gaps in the numerical sequence: there is no sign of complaints BCP-230 to 232, or BCP-238 to 249, all inclusive, and none of these were included in October's report (which stopped at BCP-229). Why the apparent omissions?

Response

Thank you for your question and apologies for the confusion with the schedule of complaints. I shall deal with these in numerical order for ease of reference.

Complaints BCP-230, 231, 232 and 238 failed to provide any supporting evidence or insufficient evidence to support their complaint and to link any allegations to an elected councillor. An invitation for additional evidence was requested but this has not been forthcoming. None of these complaints progressed beyond the initial pre-registration stage. The complainants were advised accordingly.

Complaint BCP-239 was registered and assigned a reference number, however, upon initial review it was determined to be out of scope as the issues raised did not relate to potential breaches of the Code of Conduct. The complainant was informed.

Complaint BCP-240 was assigned a reference number following the receipt of email communication, however, the complainant was asked to supply additional details required to commence the complaint. No additional information has been forthcoming.

Complaint references BCP-241 to 249 have not been assigned to any complaints for administrative reasons to avoid the allocation of duplicated numbers.

Question 2

If complaints *have* been excluded from tonight's report, have any Committee members seen anything of these omitted complaints in any way shape or form; and if so, what precisely will have they seen? Would they have been shown a summary of the allegations in each complaint, along with the reasons for dismissal; or a sample of the excluded complaints; or what, exactly?

Response

As detailed in response to the previous question, none of the omitted referenced complaints were complete and have not therefore progressed

beyond the preliminary registration stage. Members of the Standards Committee have not seen any of these complaints.

In relation to Agenda Item 9 - Work Plan and Schedule of Meetings:

Question

This Committee voted for a review of the Code of Conduct complaints procedure on 8 July 2025. On 7 October 2025, the Chair said she had asked for this review to be "expedited ... as we have been promised it for quite some time", and it is indeed listed as a priority item for January 2026 on tonight's workplan. The January 2026 meeting was of course cancelled. Why has the review not been presented to tonight's meeting, therefore; and if the problem is one of resource, how many man hours would it take, roughly, to complete the review, given that the Committee only made two suggestions for this review in the related meetings:

- (1) naming errant councillors; and
- (2) stopping the closure of complaints by officers where non-compliance arises?

Response

The delay in presenting the review is primarily due to resource and capacity constraints experienced during the Interim Monitoring Officer period, which necessitated the prioritisation of critical activities. Nonetheless, Committee members are scheduled to meet informally to consider the current arrangements, with a view to informing a thorough and comprehensive revision of the procedure. For clarity, this review will not be confined solely to the two issues previously raised but will instead evaluate the complaints procedure in its entirety. Dates are scheduled to commence the review and will be brought back to a future meeting.

[REFERENCES PROVIDED BY MR MCKINSTRY:

Item 9 question

Chair asks for the review to be "expedited ... as we have been promised it" etc:

https://www.youtube.com/live/3rM33t_jR_c?si=zGU27L9YGVgl7J6T&t=25m17s

Committee suggests that errant councillors be named:

[https://www.youtube.com/live/T-](https://www.youtube.com/live/T-5SSqVH8ZU?si=tzFWH8m3ZO_jA5As&t=37m45)

[5SSqVH8ZU?si=tzFWH8m3ZO_jA5As&t=37m45](https://www.youtube.com/live/T-5SSqVH8ZU?si=tzFWH8m3ZO_jA5As&t=37m45) ,

also

<https://www.youtube.com/live/T-5SSqVH8ZU?si=s9Dr3sOpIXKV-kOI&t=42m30s>

Committee suggests that complaints not be closed in instances of non-compliance: https://www.youtube.com/live/3rM33t_jR_c?si=CEa-0nn1gSXEK-A3&t=22m55s

et. seq. & especially Cllr Armstrong asking "Is there something we can put in the Constitution about this?" - Chair: "Well we are doing a review of the process ..."]

28. Dispensations Granted by the Monitoring Officer

The 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 purpose of the report was to request the Standards Committee retrospectively report the dispensations granted by the Monitoring Officer for the time period 1 September 2025 to 6 March 2026.

There was no Committee discussion on this item.

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee note the dispensations granted by the Monitoring Officer for the time period 1 September 2025 to 6 March 2026.

Voting: Nem. Con.

An Independent Person read out a joint statement on behalf of both Independent Persons regarding recent adverse national and local press comments about the operation of the Standards Committee.

It was stated that the Committee, comprising Councillors from across the Council, worked in a wholly apolitical manner, with political views left outside the meeting room.

It was further noted that any sanctions available to the Committee following a recognised conduct breach had been restricted by parliamentary legislation.

Finally, it was confirmed that, at the conclusion of each debate, the Chair had consistently invited the Independent Persons to comment on the validity of the process before any decision had been reached by the Councillors present.

29. Code of Conduct Complaints - 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 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report provided Members of the Standards Committee (the Committee) 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 October 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.

Following a query regarding the management of Code of Conduct complaints, the Committee was advised that the timeliness of resolutions had improved. It was explained that managing and considering code of conduct complaints was not a quick process, but that clearer measures were now in place, including recording receipt and closure dates, identifying upheld allegations, and escalating non-compliant cases more effectively. It was also highlighted that a review of the complaints process was due to begin, and it was confirmed that although the position was better than before, there remained further room for improvement.

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

30. Work Plan

The Interim Monitoring Officer provided an update noting a slight delay in the review of the Code of Conduct and there was some discussion regarding the process for the review.

A Member highlighted that once the three new town councils were created, it could lead to an increase in the volume of complaints BCP Council may need to administer. Training for new Councillors was identified as a way to mitigate this. It was noted that BCP would not charge for providing induction support, as early engagement on conduct matters was considered beneficial.

In response to a query regarding the Committee's work plan and upcoming induction activities, the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that lessons learnt would help inform the 2027 Induction Programme following the BCP Council elections.

The meeting ended at 6.23 pm

CHAIR