
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5th August, 2025

Present: Councillor Stephen Button (in the Chair), Councillors Clare Yates (Vice Chair), Melissa Fisher, Bernard Dawson MBE, Danny Cassidy and Zak Khan

Apologies Ethan Rawcliffe and Marlene Haworth

123 Apologies for absence, Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Apologies for absence were noted from Councillors Marlene Haworth and Ethan Rawcliffe.

There were no declarations of interest.

124 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes from the Standards Committee held on the 10th October 2024, were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Resolved – That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.

125 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Letter 2025

The Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) Jane Ellis, presented the report to the Committee to inform them of the annual Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) letter for 2024/25.

It was reported that the report does not flag up any areas of concern about either the Council's Services or its procedures for dealing with complaints. The LGO has received a very low level of complaints about Hyndburn over the years, which makes it difficult to identify trends of complaints. However, the low level of complaints may reflect good service delivery and/or good internal complaint procedures.

Jane Ellis reported that there had been 10 complaints about the Council but only 1 had been deemed to merit detailed investigation and which was, subsequently, upheld. She referred to comparisons with other local authorities across Lancashire and pointed out that there did not appear to be any obvious cause of concern with Hyndburn's performance and was of a comparable nature with neighbouring authorities.

In 2023, the Council had reviewed and updated its complaints policy to ensure it remained effective and fit for purpose. Jane explained that the complaints process was reduced from a three to a two-stage process, as set out in the report. The number of stage 2 complaints had been monitored over the period 2023/24 and 2024/25 and this had shown that all had been dealt with in a timely and fair manner. The only concern is the increase in complaints for the Planning department, which had risen from 1 to 6, when this had been looked into it showed this had been a repeat complainant.

Members acknowledged that the Council's process of dealing with complaints was working well and that there had been no concerns with the Council.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

126 Review of Standards Complaints 2024/25

The Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) Jane Ellis, presented the report to the Committee to discuss the summary of standards matters relating to 2024/25.

Jane Ellis informed the Committee that there had been 3 complaints received, 1 matter referred for investigation and subsequently heard at Standards Committee. The other 2 complaints were referred to her to be dealt with for an informal resolution. In 2023/24, there was only 1 complaint so a slight increase in comparison.

The Committee had a discussion around witnesses of complaints being under 18 and the process around this. Jane Ellis responded that the investigating officer would handle a situation like this appropriately but safeguarding and special measures would be looked at, and, in some cases, a complaint may not be able to be progressed in this instance.

In respect of Member training, Jane referred to Code of Conduct training which was annually provided in-house and delivered by the Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services). Since April 2025, 25 members have attended code of conduct training, which is a significant increase than the previous year when only 14 members attended. There are 6 members who have not completed the training since 2023; therefore, a further date will be added to the diary for these individuals to attend.

In addition, she gave details of training sessions provided for Councillors on Planning and Judicial Committees, which all members sat on these Committees, have attended.

A further date will be added for the Licensing Committee training session this year.

Jane Ellis informed the Committee of the new national guidance which had been issued around Standards, it is proposed a new Ethics and Integrated Commission will be set up to strengthen the Standards system and further legislation is due to be released soon.

There is also further rules from government on Proxy Voting and Hybrid Meetings.

Members acknowledged the provision of training provided and requested that training slides to be shared for each session.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

127 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved - That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item, when it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, that there would otherwise be disclosure of exempt information within the Paragraph at Schedule 12A of the Act specified at the item.

128 Privacy of the Standards Process

The Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) Jane Ellis, discussed the recent issues of leakages to the press of Council documents.

The Council have changed paperwork procedures for the Standards Assessment Panel meetings, which has proved successful.

However, there is still leakages of other paperwork and Jane Ellis asked the Committee to consider some options on how to tackle this across all Councillors.

The Committee had an open and honest discussion.

Jane Ellis also commented how well the Standards Assessment Panels are working really well and a very fair process.

Resolved - The Committee agreed a report to discuss this further and agree a principle would be taken to Leaders Policy Board within the next month.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed