

Standards Committee

Wednesday, 4 February 2026 at 5.15 pm
Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next ordinary meeting
Wednesday, 17 June 2026 at 5.15 pm

Please Note: This meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the public and press are able to attend via Teams. If you are intending to attend in person please contact the committee clerk in advance, in order that numbers of people can be appropriately managed in physical meeting rooms.

The meeting will be hybrid and an audio recording made and published on the website after the meeting.

[To join the meeting online, click here](#)

Meeting ID: 325 208 350 267
Passcode: fb7sa3do

Membership

Cllr E Buczkowski
Cllr F J Colthorpe
Cllr G Czapiewski
Cllr G Duchesne
Cllr M Fletcher
Cllr M Stratton
Cllr L Taylor
Cllr N Woollatt
Cllr D Wulff

AGENDA

Members are reminded of the need to make declarations of interest prior to any discussion which may take place

- 1 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**
To receive any apologies for absence and notices of appointment of Substitute Members (if any).
- 2 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**
To receive any questions from members of the public.
- 3 **MINUTES (Pages 7 - 10)**
To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 15 October 2025.
- 4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**
To record any interests on agenda matters.
- 5 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
To receive any announcements the Chair of the Committee may wish to make.
- 6 **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION FOLLOWING MOTIONS APPROVED BY COUNCIL (Pages 11 - 12)**
To consider any amendments to the Constitution following Motions approved by Council in the period since the last meeting.
- 7 **UPDATE ON THE STANDARDS WORKING GROUP**
To receive a verbal update on the Working Group for the Terms of Reference Report.
- 8 **STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND REPORT (Pages 13 - 16)**
To receive an update from the Monitoring Officer with regard to Strengthening the Standards Framework for Local Authorities in England.
- 9 **ACCESS TO INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**
Discussion with regard to item 10, may require the Committee to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 12 12.02(d) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. This decision may be required because consideration of this matter in public may disclose information falling within one of the descriptions of exempt information in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee would need to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Recommended that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to an individual.

10 **COMPLAINTS** (*Pages 17 - 20*)

To receive an update from the Monitoring Officer with regard to any on-going complaints being dealt with.

11 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Members are asked to note that the following items are already identified in the work programme for the next meeting:

Guidance notes for meetings of Mid Devon District Council

From 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. The Council will enable all people to continue to participate in meetings via Teams.

If the Council experience technology difficulties at a committee meeting the Chairman may make the decision to continue the meeting 'in-person' only to conclude the business on the agenda.

1. Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at Committee@middevon.gov.uk

They can also be accessed via the council's website [Click Here](#)

Printed agendas can also be viewed in reception at the Council offices at Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6PP.

2. Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership.

The Code of Conduct can be [viewed here](#):

3. Minutes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. Minutes of meetings are not verbatim.

4. Public Question Time

Residents, electors or business rate payers of the District wishing to raise a question and/or statement under public question time are asked to provide their written questions to the Democratic Services team by 5pm three clear working days before the meeting to ensure that a response can be provided at the meeting. You will be invited to ask your question and or statement at the meeting and will receive the answer prior to, or as part of, the debate on that item. Alternatively, if you are content to receive an answer after the item has been debated, you can register to speak by emailing your full name to Committee@middevon.gov.uk by no later than 4pm on the day before the meeting. You will be invited to speak at the meeting and will receive a written response within 10 clear working days following the meeting.

Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible

5. Meeting Etiquette for participants

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.

For those joining the meeting virtually:

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off your camera if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using camera then please state your name)
- Switch off your camera and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called "turn on live captions" which provides subtitles on the screen.

6. Exclusion of Press & Public

When considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act. If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed. They will be invited to return as soon as the meeting returns to open session.

7. Recording of meetings

All media, including radio and TV journalists, and members of the public may attend Council, Cabinet, PDG and Committee meetings (apart from items Media and Social Media Policy - 2023 page 22 where the public is excluded) you can view our Media and Social Media Policy [here](#). They may record, film or use social media before, during or after the meeting, so long as this does not distract from or interfere unduly with the smooth running of the meeting. Anyone proposing to film during the meeting is requested to make this known to the Chairman in advance. The Council also makes audio recordings of meetings which are published on our website [Browse Meetings, 2024 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#).

8. Fire Drill Procedure

If you hear the fire alarm you should leave the building by the marked fire exits, follow the direction signs and assemble at the master point outside the entrance. Do not use the lifts or the main staircase. You must wait there until directed otherwise by a senior officer. If anybody present is likely to need assistance in exiting the building in the event of an emergency, please ensure you have let a member of Democratic Services know before the meeting begins and arrangements will be made should an emergency occur.

9. WIFI

An open, publicly available Wi-Fi network is normally available for meetings held in the Phoenix Chambers at Phoenix House.

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held on 15 October 2025 at 5.15 pm

Present

Councillors:

E Buczkowski (Chair), G Duchesne (Vice Chair), F J Colthorpe, G Czapiewski, M Stratton, and L Taylor.

Apologies

Councillors:

M Fletcher (online), N Woollatt and D Wulff (online).

Also Present

Officers:

Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)) and Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

Councillors

J Buczkowski.

Online:

17 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:04:01)**

18

Apologies were received from Councillors: M Fletcher (online), N Woollatt and D Wulff (online).

18 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:04:18)**

None received.

19 **MINUTES (00:04:29)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2025 were **APPROVED** as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:04:45)**

No interests were declared under this item.

21 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (05:00:00)**

The Chair had no announcements to make.

22 **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION FOLLOWING MOTIONS APPROVED BY COUNCIL (05:11:00)**

The Committee **NOTED** the amendments to the constitution following motions approved by Council.

23 UPDATE FROM THE GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION (05:31:00)

The Committee had before it and **NOTED**, a verbal update from the Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) on the Government consultations. There was no response yet to the consultation on 'Strengthening the Standards and Code of Conduct for Local Authorities in England'. The Council were awaiting further legislation/guidance from Government in relation to remote attendance and proxy voting and this would be brought back to the Committee in due course.

24 REGISTER OF INTEREST UPDATE (00:06:15)

The Committee had before it and **NOTED**, a verbal update from the Democratic Services Manager on how Councillors Register of Interest Forms would be displayed on the Council's website and that in the future Members would make their own changes. A training session would be provided to all Members before this went live.

25 ACCESS TO INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (00:10:25)

The Chair stated that the Committee would remain in open session.

26 COMPLAINTS (00:11:19)

The Committee **NOTED** a verbal update from the Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) which provided an update on complaints received.

The following was highlighted:

- The reference number 2025/2 was outstanding from the last meeting. This decision was not upheld.
- The reference numbers 2025/5 and 2025/6-7 were outstanding from the last meeting, all 3 complaints were upheld, and the decisions had now been issued.
- The decisions on these 3 complaints were an informal resolution to request an apology and a review of the Code of Conduct. Also, a reminder regarding appropriate communication.
- There had been 6 new complaints that had been received to date, 5 decisions had been drafted and 1 was still outstanding for decision.
- Further information had been provided in more detail with regard to the types of complaints that had been made including if they had been upheld or not.
- The themes were disrespect, non-declaration of interest and bullying and intimidation at meetings.

The following was discussed:

- The concerns about the informal resolution if the Councillors were to refuse to comply with the outcome. What enforcements powers would the Council have

to ensure this was done? – It was explained that the current legalisation had no grounds to enforce. The Monitoring Officer could only request that the informal resolution was completed and where relevant does liaise with the relevant Clerk of the Town or Parish Council about the matter.

- The Committee was not aware whether any of the complaints were repeat offenders.
- The outcomes of the decisions and if they had been completed. – It was explained that the Monitoring Officer would issue the decision and then it would be for the Town or Parish Clerk to act i.e. arrange code of conduct training where it has been suggested. The Monitoring Officer advised that she could contact the Clerk regarding the decision to find out the outcome or next steps and feed back to the Committee, however, this may not be the case for all complaints.
- Were there any plans within the Government for changes to take place for councils to have the powers to enforce the recommendations– It was explained that the Council had submitted their responses in relation to ‘Strengthening the Standards and Conduct framework for Local Authorities in England’ and were awaiting the consultation outcome and further guidance on how this would be embedded in due course within this Council.
- Clarification about hearings and suspension. It was explained that within our Constitution, page 282 under the sanction section, it referenced what the Council had the powers to do.
- The understanding of the complexity of the complaints and to be reassured that the processes were being followed.
- With the repeat offenders would this change the approach and severity? - It was explained that each application would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis individually and whether there was a breach.
- Was the Monitoring Officer providing support to the Town and Parish Clerks? – It was explained that the Monitoring Officer often gave advice to Clerks.
- Should Councillors get involved with the Town and Parish Clerks on these matters? – It was explained that they should not get involved and should let the Monitoring Officer deal with the complaints.

27 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (00:30:35)

The following items were identified for the next meeting of the Committee:

- The Terms of Reference Report from the Working Group.
- A report on the complaint process post Local Government Reorganisation to a future meeting.
- Disclosure Barring System update
- Annual Report from the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee **NOTED** that that clerk would arrange a training session for all Members on the Councils Standards Code of Conduct.

(The meeting ended at 17.50pm)

CHAIR

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Amendments to the Constitution following Motions approved at Council

Changes from July 2025			
Page	Reference	Reason for Amendment	Comment
202	Member Scheme of Allowance	Updated following approval from Full Council	Monitoring Officer – minor and consequential changes
212	Appendix A - Functions of the Licensing Committee	Changed to word 'complaint' to 'representation'	Monitoring Officer – minor and consequential changes

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Report for: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting:	4 February 2026
Subject:	Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England
Cabinet Member:	Cllr L Taylor, Leader of the Council
Responsible Officer:	Maria De Leburne - Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

The purpose of this report is to consider the Government's response to the consultation.

Recommendation(s):

It be RESOLVED: That the Government's response to the consultation on Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England and the proposed legislative changes be noted.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As Members are aware between 18 December 2024 and 26 February 2025, the Government published a consultation 'Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England'.
- 1.2 The Government's consultation on Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for councils in England sought views on a whole system reform of the Standards and Conduct Framework for local government as per the earlier report to Standards Committee on the 3 February 2025. The proposed reforms reflected the Government's ambition to introduce a clearer and consistently applied standards and conduct framework for local government in England.

- 1.3 On the 11 November 2025, the Government published the findings and its response to the consultation, which can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england/outcome/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england-consultation-results-and-government-response#ministerial-foreword>
- 1.4 The Government received 2,092 responses to the consultation which clearly indicated a widespread appetite for system reform.

2.0 Summary

- 2.1. In summary, the Government plan to legislate for a whole system reform of the current regime as set out in the Localism Act 2011. The measure will include:
- the introduction of a mandatory Code of Conduct, which will include a behavioural code, for all local authority types and tiers. (This will allow local authorities the flexibility to develop their own guidance and protocols that must align with the mandatory code but will not form part of the code itself;)
 - a requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards committees, to include provisions on the constitution of standards committees to ensure objectivity, accountability and transparency. It should be noted in this regard that a dedicated Standards Committee is already in place at this Council;
 - the requirement that all principal authorities offer individual support during any investigation into Code of Conduct allegations to both the complainant and the councillor subject to the allegation. (Again, it should be noted that Members at the Council are already entitled to speak to one of Council's Independent Persons in connection with the complaint made against them along with the Monitoring Officer providing impartial advice / support to both the complainant and subject member when a complaint is to be or has been referred for consideration;)
 - the introduction at the authority level of a 'right for review' for both complainant and the subject elected member to have the case reassessed on grounds that will be set out in legislation;
 - powers for authorities to suspend elected members for a maximum of six months for serious Code of Conduct breaches, with the option to withhold allowances during suspension for the most serious breaches and introduce premises and facilities bans either in addition to or as standalone sanctions;
 - in response to the most serious allegations involving police investigation, or where sentencing is pending, the introduction of powers to suspend elected

members on an interim basis for an initial period of three months which, if extended, will require regular review;

- a new disqualification criterion for any elected member subject to the maximum period of suspension more than once within five years; and
- the creation of a new national appeals function, to consider appeals from elected members relating to decisions to suspend them and/or withhold allowances, and for other complainants if they consider their complaint was mishandled. Any appeal submitted will only be permitted after complainant or elected member has invoked their 'right for review' of the local standards committee decision has been invoked and that process is completed.

2.2 The Council now awaits the necessary legislation which will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the proposals within this report.

Legal Implications

The authority or any successor unitary authority will be required to implement any legislative changes to the Localism Act 2011 and to its standards regime as and when new legislation is passed.

Risk Assessment

None. There are no risks in noting the outcome of the Government's consultation and response. It will, however, be important to manage expectations; before these proposed changes can be relied upon it will require legislative changes to the Localism Act 2011.

Impact on Climate Change

None.

Equalities Impact Assessment

None.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

Our values and priorities – equally important to the 'what' we are trying to achieve, is the 'how' the organisation operates and conducts itself.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151
Date: 27.01.2026

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 26.1.26

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director
Date: 27.01.2026

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Yes/No)

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Yes/No)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Maria De Leburne- Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Background papers: None.

Agenda Item 10

Reference	Date of Complaint	Subject Councillor (and Council)	Summary of alleged breach	Area of Code alleged breached	Status of Complaint & Upheld or Not Upheld	Date of Decision	Outcome and Decision
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MDDC Standards Complaints – January 2024 -18 June 2025

2024/1	22.1.24	District Councillor	Bullying of Council Officer	Bullying Harassment	Decision issued	31.7.24	Informal resolution. -Apology requested -Further training on code of conduct and behaviour expected of a Councillor
2024/2	3.4.24	District Councillor and Parish/Town Councillor	Disrespect at a council meeting, misrepresentation, not impartial, defamation	Respect	Decision issued	31.7.24	NFA – re Parish/Town Councillor as re procedure and should be redirected to the council Re District Councillor NFA – rel minor
2024/3	10.4.24	District Councillor	Not Impartial Postings on social media	Respect	Decision issued	31.7.24	NFA – comments made in personal capacity and not acting as a Councillor but reminder to show respect and ensure if their views as personal capacity or as a councillor
2024/4	15.7.24	Parish/Town Councillor	Respect – apology not given	Respect	Decision issued	8.1.25	NFA – comments made in 2018/rel minor
2024/5	26.7.24	District Councillor	Honesty in council minutes	Honesty	Decision issued	4.9.24	NFA – failed the legal jurisdiction test. Reminder to be clear in

Reference	Date of Complaint	Subject Councillor (and Council)	Summary of alleged breach	Area of Code alleged breached	Status of Complaint & Upheld or Not Upheld	Date of Decision	Outcome and Decision
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							any language used
2024/6-11 (x6 complaints all sent together)	5.8.24	Parish/Town who is District Councillor	Behaviour in emails re a council meeting	Used position to secure for someone an advantage/dis advantage Brought your office or the council into disrepute	Decision issued	2.1.25	Informal resolution – apology to all 6 Councillors & further training on the code of conduct and behaviour expected of a Councillor
2024/12	5.8.24	2 Parish/Town Councillors	Harassment of council employees verbally, in person and on social media and in council meetings	Respect, Treat employees with respect, Bullying and Harassment	Decision issued	9.1.25	Informal resolution- Clerk and employees receive written apology -Receive Code of Conduct training re behaviour is or is not acceptable -Training on social media -Independent mediation with the clerk
2024/13	13.9.24	District Councillors x3	Disrespect – not respond to emails	Disrespect	Decision issued	2.1.25	NFA – as not a breach of the code of conduct
2024/14	22.11.24	Parish/Town Councillor	Comments on Social media re office staff	Bringing office into disrepute			Complaint withdrawn as apology given by councillor
2025/1	20.1.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Respect in person and on communication in social media	Respect Social media	Decision issued	29.4.25	NFA – not acting in capacity as a councillor but in personal capacity.
2025/2	3.3.25	Parish/Town Councillor who is a	Bullying, intimidation and falsehoods	Bullying	Decision issued – Not upheld	30.7.25	NFA- not amounted to bullying and harassment

Reference	Date of Complaint	Subject Councillor (and Council)	Summary of alleged breach	Area of Code alleged breached	Status of Complaint & Upheld or Not Upheld	Date of Decision	Outcome and Decision
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		District Councillor					
2025/3	18.3.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Bullying and Harassment	Bullying and Harassment	Decision issued	30.4.25	NFA – not amounted to bullying and harassment – reminder to Councillor re tone and words in emails and treat others with courtesy and respect. Listen to clerk advice.
2025/4	24.3.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Bullying and Harassment	Bullying and Harassment	Decision issued	30.4.25	NFA – not amounted to bullying and harassment – reminder to Councillor re tone and words in emails and treat others courtesy and respect
2025/5	6.5.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Disrespect, bullying etc to council staff	Bullying, Respect, Honesty and Integrity	Decision Issued – Upheld	3.9.25	Informal resolution – req apology and review Code of Conduct and reminder of appropriate communication
2025/6-7	3.6.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Disrespect, bullying at a Council meeting	Respect, Bullying Brought office/council into disrepute	Decisions issued - Upheld	3.9.25	Informal resolution – req apology to Cllr and Council and asked that training be provided on the Code of Conduct
2025/8	12.8.25	Parish/Town Councillors x2	Disrespect and language used in a council meeting	Disrespect	Decisions issued - 1x Cllr Upheld	20.10.25	On the upheld complaint – informal resolution – req review COC and

Reference	Date of Complaint	Subject Councillor (and Council)	Summary of alleged breach	Area of Code alleged breached	Status of Complaint & Upheld or Not Upheld	Date of Decision	Outcome and Decision
					1x Cllr Not Upheld		undertake training and reminder re behaviour and language during communication with others
2025/9	17.7.25	Parish/Town /District/ County Councillor	Disrespect at a public event	Disrespect	Decision issued- Not Upheld	20.10.25	NFA in personal capacity -but given reminder be careful in personal capacity not to refer to potential council matters.
2025/10	22.7.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Non declaration of an interest	Non declaration of an interest	Decision Issued – Not upheld	11.11.25	NFA
2025/11	18.7.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Non declaration of an interest and disrespect	Non declaration of an interest	Decision Issued – Not Upheld	17.11.25	NFA – reminder to Cllr to declare relevant interests
2025/12	24.7.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Non declaration of an interest	Non declaration of an interest	Decision Issued – Not Upheld	17.11.25	NFA – reminder to Cllr to declare relevant interests
2025/13	Via DCC 14.8.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Bullying and intimidation at meetings. Respect and impartiality.	Bullying and intimidation at meetings. Respect and impartiality.	Decision Issued – Not Upheld	23.1.26	NFA – reminder when chair meetings to be respectful
2025/14	4.11.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Social Media post				
2025/15	5.11.25	Parish/Town Councillor	Social Media post				