
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE,
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 15TH JULY, 2026 AT 10.00 AM
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA,
CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Wiggins (Chairman), Talbot (Vice-Chairman), Alexander, Baker, Casey and J Henderson
Also Present:	David Irvine (Independent Person), Shelia Murphy (Independent Person) (items 5 (part) - 7 only) and Jane Watts (Independent Person)
In Attendance:	Lisa Hastings (Corporate Director (Law & Governance) & Monitoring Officer), Karen Hayes (Corporate Governance, Performance & Procurement Manager), Bethany Jones (Democratic Services Officer), Katie Koppenaal (Democratic Services Officer) and Mae Duffy (Performance and Leadership Support Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Sue Gallone (one of the Council's Independent Persons).

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was moved by Councillor Alexander, seconded by Councillor J Henderson and:-

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, 22 April 2026 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made on this occasion.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

No Questions on Notice had been submitted by Members pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 38 on this occasion.

5. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER - A.1 - LICENSING AND REGISTRATION PROBITY PROTOCOL - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND REVISED LICENSING AND REGISTRATION PROBITY PROTOCOL

The Committee considered the report (A.1) that presented the updated revised version of the Licensing and Registration Probity Protocol, following consultation with the members of the Licensing and Registration Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Community, Officers responsible for licensing services in the Governance and the Environment & Housing Directorates and the Independent Persons.

It was reported that some themes that had emerged from the consultation were:-

- expand more on 'prejudicial' interest;

- add to Member training section about training to be allowed to sit on the Committee should be from the Council but could be topped up through other means such as LGA;
- make 'to stay open-minded' stronger; and
- to add that Members are not allowed to discuss blue pages documents outside of the Committee membership.

Members were made aware that the outcome of the consultation was set out in detail in Appendix B of the Officer report (A.1).

The Committee noted their opinion that the relevant Ward Councillors should be informed of any changes to a premises licence or the removal of a premises licence. Officers took this under advisement.

It was moved by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Casey and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee:-

- (a) notes the outcome of the consultation with members of the Licensing and Registration Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Community, Officers responsible for licensing services in the Governance and the Environment & Housing Directorates and the Independents Persons;
- (b) endorses the revised Licensing and Registration Probity Protocol (with the tracked changes being accepted) and recommends to Full Council that it be adopted and incorporated into the Council's Constitution; and
- (c) authorises the Council's Monitoring Officer to make the administrative amendments, as highlighted at the Committee meeting, prior to the Protocol's consideration at Full Council.

6. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER - A.2 - REVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

Members were told that the current Social Media Guidance for Members ("the Guidance") had been last considered by the Standards Committee at its meeting held on 2 February 2022. A revised draft Social Media Guidance for Members, with a review conducted by Officers, and based on current uses of social media, had been presented to the Committee at its meeting held on 22 April 2026.

Members were also made aware that the Council recognised the benefits of communication between Members and residents that social media platforms afforded and which were utilised by the majority of Members with varying frequency. Social media could reach a demographic of society that might not always be reached by more traditional methods, and this along with the speed with which communication could take place, provided both potential benefits and pitfalls, over and above 'traditional' means of correspondence.

The Committee was informed that the review of the Guidance had considered the Local Government Association's Model Social Media Guidance and the published Social Media Guidance for Councillors.

Members were updated that, since the publication of the Officer report (A.2), the LGA had updated their guidance, but that this Council guidance's was still in line with their updated version.

Officers told Members that a dedicated online Member Development Session had been conducted on 24 June 2026 by an external trainer, incorporating the draft Guidance and which had covered the following topics:-

- The landscape of social media in 2026;
- Why be on social media? Building trust and engaging with residents;
- Having a plan;
- Which platforms are best? Exploring the main options;
- Top tips for best engagement, including lessons from deep dive social media review of Councils around the country;
- Good practice for elected Member accounts;
- Misinformation, disinformation and deep fake;
- Good governance, staying safe online and dealing with negative/hostile remarks; and
- Resources to assist going forward.

The training had also covered that inappropriate use of social media could amount to a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct and that it was the individual responsibility of each Member to consider the Guidance and Members' Code of Conduct when using social media and indeed all forms of communication.

Members were also told that 13 Members had attended the training session, at the conclusion of which a feedback form had been circulated to all, that requested any further comment/inclusion to be incorporated within the final version of the Guidance. At the time of writing, one feedback form had been received and which had not contained anything further to be included within the Guidance.

It was moved by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Talbot and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report and the associated feedback comments arising from the dedicated Members' Development Session on social media;
- (b) approves and formally adopts the final version of the Social Media Guidance for Members, as set out in Appendix A of the Officer report (A.2) and that it be circulated to all Members of the Council;
- (c) advocates that Town and Parish Councils should take ownership of introducing the right policies/guidance for their own Town and Parish Councils and that Appendix A of the Officer report (A.2) be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils with an invitation to adopting it should they deem appropriate; and
- (d) authorises the Monitoring Officer to make minor and administrative amendments, as required, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of social media and associated social media platforms available.

7. UPDATE BY THE MONITORING OFFICER COVERING COMPLAINTS AND NATIONAL POLICY CHANGES

The Committee had before it the Monitoring Officer's update on existing and new conduct complaint cases.

TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL MONITORING OFFICER UPDATE July 2026

Council	Complainant	Current status	Final outcome	Comments
Existing Cases from last update:				
Council	Complainant	Current status	Final outcome	Comments
DISTRICT	PUBLIC – received 11 Mar 2025	ONGOING	Investigation – internally appointed Investigator	Matter relates to communications between parties.
PARISH x 3	PUBLIC – received 28 Oct 2025	ONGOING	External investigator appointed	Matter relates to conduct at public meetings and declaration of interests.
PARISH	PUBLIC – received 06 Nov 2025	ONGOING	External investigator appointed (to be run in parallel with above investigation)	Matter relates to use of social media.
DISTRICT	DISTRICT CLLR – received 08 Jun 2026	ONGOING	With MO for final Decision Notice	Matter relates to use of social media.
TOWN	PUBLIC – received 22 Jun 2026	ONGOING	Awaiting response from Subject Member (in line with Complaints Process timescales)	Matter relates to access to information and complying with the Code of Conduct.
PARISH	PUBLIC – received 25 Jun 26	ONGOING	Awaiting response from Subject Member (in line with Complaints Process timescales)	Matter relates to conduct at a public meeting.
New cases since last update – three at the time of writing				
<u>General Notes – 2025/26 Summary:</u>				
Overall, three cases had been received so far in 2026/27.				
Since the last update, one case remained being investigated by an internally appointed				

investigator and two cases were being investigated by an externally appointed investigator, with all three in the latter stages of the investigation process.

Requests for dispensations:

None since the last update.

Officers gave a presentation to Members on the following national matters:

- *Saffron Walden Town Council;*
- *Westmorland and Furness Council;*
- *Standards Framework reform – update;*
- *Implementation?;*
- *Thameside Council – ‘Trigger Me Timbers’ WhatsApp Group;*
- *Findings – all four Cllrs acting in official capacity;*
- *The Panel found in addition that;*
- *Sanctions;*
- *Topical – Use of local authority resources;*
- *Cllr who “made up his mind” ahead of planning vote breached code;*
- *“Complex area of law & the concept of predetermination is not straightforward”.*

The Committee **NOTED** the foregoing.

The meeting was declared closed at 11.39 am

Chairman