

## Agenda for Standards Committee Thursday, 15th January, 2026, 10.00 am

### Members of Standards Committee

**Councillors:** T Dumper, E Rylance (Chair), S Hughes, J Loudoun, J Bailey, I Chubb and J Whibley

**Independent Persons:** P Coulter and M Goscomb

**Independent Representatives:** K Bryant, S Jupp and P Wilde

**Town and Parish Council Representatives:** C Lockyear, F Pullman and S Sexton

**Venue:** Council Chamber, Council Offices, Blackdown House, Honiton EX14 1EJ

**Contact:** Debbie Meakin;

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(or group number 01395 517546)

Wednesday, 7 January 2026

**At the close of this meeting, Committee Members only will remain for case studies, and training for new members.**

### 1 Welcome from the Chair

To welcome newly appointed members of the committee, and formally thank outgoing members for their contribution.

### 2 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 6)

To agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 20 November 2025 as an accurate record.

### 3 Apologies

Cllr Chris Lockyear, Town and Parish Council Representative

### 4 Declarations of interest

Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)

### 5 Public speaking

Information on [public speaking](#) is available online

### 6 Matters of urgency

Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online

### 7 Confidential/exempt item(s)



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To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the Press) have been excluded. There are no items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

## 8 Future committee dates

Scheduled dates for the remainder of the civic term are:

- 9<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at 10am

Proposed dates for the next civic term are:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2026
- 1<sup>st</sup> October 2026
- 21<sup>st</sup> January 2027
- 8<sup>th</sup> April 2027

All meetings with a 10am start time, to be held in the Council Chamber at Blackdown House.

## 9 Work Programme update (Pages 7 - 10)

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, any members of the public are now allowed to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on all public meetings (including on social media). No prior notification is needed but it would be helpful if you could let the democratic services team know you plan to film or record so that any necessary arrangements can be made to provide reasonable facilities for you to report on meetings. This permission does not extend to private meetings or parts of meetings which are not open to the public. You should take all recording and photography equipment with you if a public meeting moves into a session which is not open to the public.

If you are recording the meeting, you are asked to act in a reasonable manner and not disrupt the conduct of meetings for example by using intrusive lighting, flash photography or asking people to repeat statements for the benefit of the recording. You may not make an oral commentary during the meeting. The Chair has the power to control public recording and/or reporting so it does not disrupt the meeting.

Members of the public exercising their right to speak during Public Speaking will be recorded.

### Decision making and equalities

**For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546**

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 20 November 2025**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 9.00 am and ended at 10.35 am

#### **12 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Standards Committee held on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **13 Declarations of interest**

Cllr J Bailey; ORI Member of Devon County Council; did not take part or vote in minute item 18 as County Councillor.

#### **14 Public speaking**

None.

#### **15 Matters of urgency**

None.

#### **16 Confidential/exempt item(s)**

None.

#### **17 Appointment of Independent Representatives, Independent Persons and Town and Parish Representatives**

The report from the Monitoring Officer set out the recruitment process and the outcome of the interviews to fill the seats that expire this year.

The report recommended individuals to the Committee to recommend on to Council for co-option. Once appointed, the six applicants will be in place for a term of 4 years or until local government reorganisation, whichever is sooner. They will also receive an annual allowance of £400 per annum in accordance with the adopted scheme.

The Chair and committee members gave their warm thanks for the valued contribution of Professor Diana Kuh (Independent Person), Cllr Mrs Pauline Stott (Town and Parish Representative) and Mr Robert Wood (Independent Member) and their work on the committee over many years.

The committee did raise the issue of the number of women now on the committee as a whole, once the appointments had been approved. Getting the recruitment out to individual town and parish councils was also discussed. Whilst the committee were assured that the recommendations were meeting the requirements of the positions, any further recruitment would be discussed at a future meeting.

**RECOMMENDED to Council the appointment of:**

1. Mr Steve Jupp and Mr Philip Wilde as co-opted non-voting Independent Members on the Standards Committee for a term of 4 years, or until local government reorganisation, whichever is sooner;
2. Cllr Chris Lockyer of Sidmouth Town Council and Cllr Francis Pullman of Westhill Parish Council as co-opted non-voting Town/Parish Representatives on the Standards Committee for a term of 4 years, or until local government reorganisation, whichever is sooner;
3. Mr Martin Goscombe and Mr Pat Coulter as Independent Persons for a term of 4 years, or until local government reorganisation, whichever is sooner.

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**Applications for dispensations**

The Committee had previously considered and approved a number of dispensations for local government reorganisation at the beginning of the year.

Following County Council elections in May 2025, applications for a dispensation have been received from District Councillors who were appointed to the County Council at that election. These were from Cllrs Arnott, Hayward and Hookway.

The categories of dispensation available to the Committee to grant in these circumstances are:

- considers that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area; and
- considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation

The Committee were asked to consider the applications and decide whether or not to grant the dispensation. Any grant was recommended to be in place until the next District Council election or local government reorganisation, whichever is sooner.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that those granted a dispensation would receive guidance that the dispensation does not override the legal requirement to avoid bias or predetermination.

The committee sought to amend the proposed recommendations in order to handle subsequent dispensation applications.

**RESOLVED**

1. the granting of dispensations to dual-hatted County and District Council members, including any future applications that meet the same criteria, to enable them to discuss and vote on any matter relating to devolution or local government reorganisation in Devon, be approved, with effect from the date of this meeting or the date of the application, whichever is sooner;
2. that the dispensations are approved on the basis that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area;
3. that the dispensations are granted until the next District Council elections or until the date of vesting for a new Unitary Council, whichever is sooner.

(Cllr Jess Bailey left the meeting for this item)

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## **Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework consultation update**

The Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England consultation sought views from members of the public, current and prospective local authority elected members, local government officers from all types and tiers of authorities, and local authority sector representative organisations.

The Committee considered the consultation on the 16th January 2025 and delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to respond to the consultation by the February deadline.

The update report set out the summary of government proposals in response to the consultation, on the elements of:

- Introduction of a mandatory code of conduct
- Standards committees for all authorities
- Empowering individuals affected by councillor misconduct to come forward
- Introducing the sanction of suspension
- Interim suspension
- Disqualification for multiple breaches and gross misconduct
- Appeals and a national appeals function

There was no timetable set for when legislation changes would come before Government.

Discussion on the proposals included:

- What would be put in place for the benefit of the electorate where their elected member had been suspended; the electorate would effectively be disenfranchised if a suspension was imposed on a single member ward;
- If allowances would be paid to a suspended member if they were subsequently cleared of any breach of the code of conduct;
- Detail on the proposals would come forward once the legislation was put before Government for debate.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the update.

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## **Code of Conduct Complaints update**

The report gave details of complaints covering the period January to November 2025.

The update highlighted a positive move to fewer complaints being received; and a consistent reduction in investigations over the past five years. The Chair and Vice Chair gave thanks to the hard work of both officers, and the Independent Persons on complaints.

In response to a question, whilst training was done regularly for District Council members, at town and parish level the resources varied; DALC could provide training, and the Monitoring Officer had plans to arrange a further session for Towns and Parishes in the near future.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the update.

21 **Gifts and Hospitality update**

The committee received an update on the registration of gifts and hospitality received for the period January to October 2025.

Training on the updated protocol on registration would be provided to Members in the coming months.

Feedback on the report included:

- The appropriateness of accepting tickets;
- Pleased to see declarations of below the agreed threshold, for reason of transparency;
- Declarations at town and parish level were dependent on the code adopted;
- All offers, accepted or declined, should be declared to demonstrate to the public the level and type of offers being made to both councillors and officers.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

E Rylance (Chair)

J Bailey

I Chubb

T Dumper

S Hughes

J Loudoun

**Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

R Collins

**Independent Persons**

D Kuh

**Independent Representatives**

R Wood

M Goscomb

K Bryant

**Town and Parish Representatives**

P Stott

S Sexton

**Officers in attendance:**

Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)

**Apologies:**

Pat Coulter, Independent Person

Chair

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Date:

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Report to: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting 15 January 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



## Standards Committee Work Programme

### Report summary:

To note progress in relation to the Committee's Work Programme for 2025/26

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

To note progress in relation to the Work Programme for 2025/2026.

### Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Committee has a robust work programme in place and can monitor activity against that Work Programme at each meeting.

Officer: Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer, email [melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk)

### Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; Agreeing a Work Programme for the Committee will ensure that important issues are not overlooked and that the Committee can monitor progress against that work programme.

**Links to background information** None

**Link to Council Plan**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

## Purpose of Report

1. The following table sets out the Work Programme as agreed by the Committee for 2025/26. The Committee are invited to note progress against the agreed work programme.

Description	Timetable	Responsible Officer	Comments
Annual Report from the Chair of the Committee regarding the work of the Committee	April 2026	Chair/Monitoring Officer	To be presented to the next meeting on 9 April 2026.
Promote ethical standards by providing support and training in relation to the Code of Conduct to District Councillors, Parish Clerks and Councillors (as required);	Training provided to District Councillors in May/June 2023  Training provided to Town and Parish Councils in September and November 2023 (including District Councillors)  Further training to be provided in Autumn 2025.	Monitoring Officer	Training provided to District Councillors on 23 October 2025. A further session to be arranged in the first quarter of 2026. Training also to be offered to Towns and Parishes in the first quarter of 2026.
Receive conduct of hearings training	To be agreed if required	Monitoring Officer	Will be provided if a hearing is required.
Continue to investigate ways of resolving issues before they escalate to a formal complaint	Report as required – presentation from early 2025 to be presented to any new members of the Committee as part of induction	Monitoring Officer	2025 report to form part of the induction to new co-opted members on the day of the Committee meeting (following close of the meeting)
Promote ethical standards by engaging via the Chair of the Committee on a regular basis with the political leaders and Chief Executive of the Council	Twice a year	Chair	Ongoing.

Receive updates regarding Code of Conduct complaints	Every meeting	Monitoring Officer	No updates on this agenda as nothing further to report.
Hear Standards complaints where an investigation has concluded there has been a breach of the Code and the Monitoring Officer refers the matter for hearing	As required	Monitoring Officer Sub-Committee of Standards Committee	As required (none to date in 2025/26)
Consider dispensation applications	When applications received	Monitoring Officer	Applications considered at the last meeting for Local Government Reorganisation. No applications received since.
Conduct a review of the Code of Conduct	Reviewed July 2025	Monitoring Officer	Complete
Consider draft Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members	July 2025	Monitoring Officer	Complete
Consider changes to the procedures for dealing with Officer Declaration of Personal Interests	November 2025	Monitoring Officer	To move to 9 April 2026 due to officers still working on this.
Receive an update on Standards issues	Every meeting	Monitoring Officer	Update on outcome of Government consultation provided at last meeting. No further updates received. Committee considered standards cases after last Committee meeting and that discussion will be completed following this meeting.
To receive regular updates on the gifts and hospitality accepted or refused by members and officers	July 2025 and January 2026	Monitoring Officer	Update provided on 20 November 2025. Next update will be provided as part of 2026/27 work programme.
To review Protocols relating to standards and behaviour	To be agreed	Monitoring Officer	Changes to Member/Officer Protocol and new

			Gifts and Hospitality Protocol now agreed by Full Council and in the process of being added to Council's constitution.
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**Financial implications:**

There are no financial implications to be added to this report.

**Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report.