

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 2 July 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.05 am and ended at 11.03 am

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th April 2026 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to an amendment on minute 29 Standards work programme update.

The original part of the paragraph of minute 29 reads:

Suggestions were also made for more clarity on emerging best practice being brought to the committee outside of the work on case scenarios for learning exercises for committee members;

It is now replaced as:

A proposal for the inclusion of emerging best practice on the work programme was made, in order for any emerging best practice identified by the Monitoring Officer to be brought to the committee in public session for debate and recommendation of implementation by the Committee. This proposal was agreed.

2 Declarations of interest

None.

3 Public speaking

None.

4 Matters of urgency

None.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None.

6 Standards update

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented an update report to the committee.

Changes to the requirements for the disclosure of home address on Councillor register of interest form.

In line with Section 32A of the Localism Act 2011 (as inserted by Section 65 of the *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026*), there is now a clear requirement that a councillor's home address must not be disclosed on the authority's public register of interests unless the councillor has expressly requested otherwise.

This means that:

- The home address will not be published on the public register as a matter of course; and
- Each councillor now has the option to opt in should they wish their home address details to remain publicly available.

The change applies only to the councillor's home address. They are still required to declare and include in their register of interests any other land or property in which they have an interest within the authority's area (or as otherwise required by their local Code of Conduct), and these details will continue to be published on the register as normal.

The committee were informed about progress to meet the requirements, with the default option being to redact the home address until instruction to opt in had been provided. The change in legislation came into force on the 29 June 2026. All District Councillor register of interest forms has been updated; and nine town/parish councils were due to be completed in the coming days of the 66 in the district area.

Comments and discussion included:

- An update to the generic register of interest form for town and parish councils would be sent out to cover this change; as would the instructions to District Councillors who updated their form online (with a further reminder sent of how to update their form).

Training of Town/Parish Councillors in relation to the Code of Conduct

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that training continued, with the next session scheduled for 21 July 2026 online in the evening, to allow as many parish and town councillors as possible to attend. The invite had been sent to the town and parish clerks, as a record of individual councillor email addresses was not stored and would be difficult to maintain.

RESOLVED that the Standards update be noted.

7 Code of Conduct complaints update

The Committee noted the Code of Conduct complaints update for April to June 2026, covering 13 recorded complaint references and two recorded enquiries.

- Most complaints related to Town/Parish matters or Councillors, with all recorded complainants being members of the public.
- The main recurring allegation was failure to treat others with respect and/or bringing the role or authority into disrepute.
- Other allegations included failure to declare interests, misuse of position, bullying, harassment and social media-related conduct.
- Several complaints were rejected at Stage 1; where decisions were recorded, a number resulted in no further action.
- Stage 1 and Stage 2 timescales were not met in several cases, with reasons including change of personnel, volume of documentation, delayed councillor responses, additional information being awaited from complainants and workload pressures.
- In one case concerning declaration of interests, the issue had already been rectified, and the councillor was reminded of their duties.
- Several cases noted, on inspection, that the complaint was not related to the councillor's role and therefore did not progress further under the Code.

- Two Code of Conduct enquiries were recorded in June 2026: one anticipated to progress to a complaint, and one where advice was given on the distinction between conduct in a private capacity and conduct in an official capacity.

Comments and discussion included:

- Recognition of the circumstances that had impacted on timescales not being met but urging action to be sought to prevent the deadlines being missed. Setting the baseline from the point of all relevant information being received would improve the performance statistics; and the committee were informed that a current open vacancy would be filled that month, with maternity leave ending for another relevant role in September;
- Nearing elections for town and parishes in May 2027 may also see an increase in complaints as had been evidenced in previous years.

RESOLVED that the Code of Conduct complaints update be noted.

8 **Work programme**

The work programme set out work already undertaken, with planned work for October 2026 covering review of the Code of Conduct, review of the procedure for Officer declaration, and an update on gifts and hospitality received by Councillors and officers.

Comments and suggestion included:

- Clarification that the review of the Code of Conduct would likely be a light touch review due to the proximity of local government reorganisation, with the result of the review put to the Committee for consideration;
- That the promotion of ethical standards by the Chair engaging with political leaders could be reported verbally back to the Committee twice a year;
- To include an update from the Monitoring Officer at least annually that the Register of Interests was accurate and up to date;
- Query about including in published agendas, the declaration of interests flow chart. An example from BCP authority was shown. In response, the Deputy Monitoring Officer would consider what steps could be taken to remind District Councillors of the flow chart as a reminder of what action they should take if they have an interest to declare.
- Query about monitoring of the whistleblowing policy. This was confirmed as falling to the remit of the Audit & Governance Committee.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

S Hughes
J Loudoun (Chair)
T Dumper
J Bailey
C Brown

Independent Persons:

M Goscomb

Independent Representatives

K Bryant
S Jupp
P Wilde

Town and Parish Representatives

S Sexton
C Lockyear
F Pullman

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

R Collins

Officers in attendance:

James Docherty, Assistant Director Governance & Legal
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Cllr Iain Chubb
Cllr E Rylance
Cllr E Wragg
Patrick Coulter, Independent Person

Chairman

Date: