

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES**

**Monday, 19th January, 2026**

**Present:** Cllr D A S Davis (Chair), Cllr K Barton, Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr R V Roud, Cllr K B Tanner, Cllr T Bishop (substitute) and Cllr C J Williams (substitute)

Together with parish/town council representatives Mr M Caraboni\* (Plaxtol Parish Council), Ms P Garrett (Addington Parish Council), Mr A Stead (Burham Parish Council), Mr A Sullivan\* (Aylesford Parish Council) and Mr R White\* (Ditton Parish Council)

\* participated via MS Teams

Cllr J Clokey was also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Mrs S Bell (Vice Chair), G C Bridge and Mrs T Dean and Parish/Town Councillors O Baldock (Hadlow Parish Council) and D Beach (Wrotham Parish Council)

#### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

##### **ST 26/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Notification of substitute Members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr Bishop substituted for Cllr Bridge
- Cllr Williams substituted for Cllr Bell

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these Councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

##### **ST 26/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

##### **ST 26/3 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Committee held on 2 June 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION****ST 26/4 STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND - OUTCOME OF GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION**

The report presented a comprehensive overview of the Government's response to its consultation on 'Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England', highlighting the proposed reforms and actions. The purpose of the report was to keep Members informed of these changes.

The consultation, published on 18 December 2024 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), focused on introducing strengthened sanctions for breaches of conduct by elected members in local authorities. 2,092 responses were received, with widespread support for a mandatory code of conduct and increased powers for Standards Committees, including the ability to suspend Members for up to six months for serious breaches.

The Government intended to legislate for a mandatory code of conduct, formal constitution of Standards Committees, publication of investigation outcomes, and introduction of suspension and disqualification powers in cases of serious misconduct or repeated breaches. Both complainants and subject Members would have a right of review for Standards Committee decisions, with potential escalation to a national appeals body. Guidance and support measures for individuals affected by Councillor misconduct would be developed, including consideration of an independent helpline.

Members noted the report and its implications for future standards and conduct procedures within local authorities. Clarification was sought regarding the impact of interim suspensions on the six-month disqualification rule and noted that the precise implications of this would depend on the details of future legislation and once the legislative details were published, further clarification would be provided.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

**ST 26/5 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on the complaints made to the Monitoring Officer that a Member may have failed to comply with their authority's code of conduct.

Details of the complaints assessed since 20 January 2025 were set out in Annex 1. Members noted that a further four complaints were received, but not progressed as the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair of the Joint Standards Committee and the

Independent Persons, were unable to agree to the complainants' requests for anonymity.

One complaint was made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) during 2025 in relation to six complaints submitted to the Monitoring Officer during the period June 2024 to January 2025. The LGSCO had decided that it would not investigate the complaint because they had previously investigated and decided part of the complaint and there was insufficient evidence of fault to warrant an investigation.

**RESOLVED:** That the report, be noted.

**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

**ST 26/6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 7.56 pm