STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE
12th March, 2026

Present:- Councillor Clarke (in the Chair); Councillors T. Collingham, Hall, Harper, Lelliott and Monk and also Mr. M. Senior (Parish Council Representative).

Also in attendance were Mr. P. Beavers (Independent Person) and Ms. R. Wright (Independent Member – Observer) and officers Mr. S. Fletcher (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Mr. P. Horsfield (Monitoring Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beck and Keenan, Mr. T. Griffin (Parish Council Representative), Mr. D. Roper-Newman (Independent Person) and Mrs. A. Bingham and Ms. K. Penney (Independent Members).

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for (Minute Nos. 37 and 38 (Whistleblowing and Complaints) on the grounds that the appendices to those reports involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH JANUARY, 2026

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th January, 2026 were approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

33. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which set out a draft Work programme for the Standards and Ethics Committee for the period January to November, 2026.

The draft Work Plan was attached as an appendix to the report and its adoption would ensure that the Standards and Ethics Committee was able to focus on a range of issues throughout the year and provide transparency in relation to its work.

The Committee gave consideration to the draft Work Plan and had no further suggestions to add.

Resolved:- (1) That the draft Work Plan be received and the contents noted.

(2) That a finalised Work Plan for the period January to November, 2026 be approved.

34. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which set out the work undertaken by the Standards and Ethics Committee in 2025.

The report gave a detailed overview of the work undertaken successfully throughout the year.

The Committee was invited to make comment and confirmed satisfaction with the content.

Resolved:- That the Annual Report and the work undertaken be received and noted.

35. DEBATE NOT HATE WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Deputy Monitoring Officer provided an update on progress of the Standards and Ethics Committee Working Group which was tasked with looking at the Debate Not Hate Campaign and keeping Members safe.

The Working Group had met three times and had already made a number of recommendations to take forward.

The last meeting had focused on health and safety and online security and a more detailed discussion would take place at the next meeting in April with the Head of Democratic Services.

The Chair invited other members of the Committee to join the Working Group and anyone wishing to be involved should contact the Clerk who confirmed the next hybrid meeting to be Tuesday, 14th April, 2026 at 2.00 p.m.

Resolved:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

36. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which set out proposed minor amendments to the Whistleblowing Policy following a review of the Policy.

A small number of minor amendments to the Policy were proposed (set out as an appendix to the main report) and included:-

- Amendments to the name of the Chief Executive to John Edwards.
- Amended link to the Equality Act 2010 guidance.

The legislation referred to in the Policy remained in force and had not been changed. The procedure for dealing with disclosures once they have been received by the Council also remained the same. The telephone numbers and other contact details available for disclosure within the Policy have been checked and were still current.

Furthermore, the current Policy, subject to the above amendments, was appropriate and remained fit for purpose.

The Committee in accepting the amendments questioned the delay in updating the Policy and was advised this should have been carried out in a more timely manner.

Resolved:- (1) That the proposed amendments to the Whistleblowing Policy be endorsed.

(2) That any further amendments to the Whistleblowing Policy or suggestions be submitted.

(3) That subject to (2) above the final Whistleblowing Policy be approved.

37. A REVIEW OF CONCERNS RAISED PURSUANT TO THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report and appendix presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, which provided an overview of the Whistleblowing cases which have been received over the past year. It was pointed out there was no recurring themes or trends associated with the cases submitted.

Particular reference was made to the appendix to the report which set out clearly the description of the concerns received and action taken.

Reference was made to one particular case and an update provided on the stage of progress.

Resolved:- That the Whistleblowing concerns raised over the previous year and the actions taken to address these matters be noted.

38. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, detailing the progress with the handling of complaints relating to breaches of the Council’s Code of Conduct for Members and Town and Parish Councillors. The report listed the current cases of complaint and the action being taken in respect of each one.

Reference was made to each related case and recommended outcomes/actions identified were highlighted.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

39. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Committee's consideration.