Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Standards and Ethics Committee - 12th November 2026

Report Title
Solace Commission on Professional Standards and Ethics - “Enough is Enough” Report

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?
No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
N/A

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Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary
This report updates the Committee on the publication by Solace of “Enough is Enough: A Blueprint for Rebuilding Standards in Local Government”, the final report of the Solace Commission on Professional Standards and Ethics, and highlights its relevance to the Council’s standards, governance and ethical culture arrangements.

Recommendations
That the Committee:

(1) notes the publication and principal findings of the Solace report;

(2) considers the report’s recommendations insofar as they relate to member conduct, member-officer relationships and governance

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 - Solace, “Enough is Enough: A Blueprint for Rebuilding Standards in Local Government”, October 2026

Background Papers
Solace, “Enough is Enough: A Blueprint for Rebuilding Standards in Local Government”, October 2026;
Solace news release, “Enough is Enough: Solace Sets Out Blueprint to Tackle Poor Behaviour in Local Government”, 21 October 2026.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Solace Commission on Professional Standards and Ethics - “Enough is Enough” Report

1. Background

1.1 Solace (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) published “Enough is Enough: A Blueprint for Rebuilding Standards in Local Government” in October 2026. It is the final report of the Solace Commission on Professional Standards and Ethics, which was established in summer 2025 to examine ethical challenges in modern local public service and to identify practical action to strengthen standards and behaviour. The full report is Appendix 1.

1.2 The report is broader than a review of the statutory member standards regime. It considers leadership, organisational culture, governance, accountability and member-officer relationships, and argues that legislation and formal complaints processes alone will not secure lasting improvement without visible ethical leadership and effective local arrangements.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Solace reports evidence of rising incivility, inappropriate behaviour and declining standards affecting both elected members and officers. Its member survey found that 92% of responding chief executives and senior officers had experienced poor standards or inappropriate behaviour within the previous three years. The most frequently identified issue was a lack of respect, followed by bullying, harassment and discrimination.

2.2 The report identifies consequences extending beyond the individuals directly affected. These include deterioration in member-officer relationships, reduced organisational effectiveness, difficulties in partnership working, risks to recruitment and retention, and damage to public confidence in local democracy and public institutions.

2.3 Part I of the report examines the nature and causes of poor standards, including disrespect, bullying and abuse, blurred boundaries, social media and technology, political and financial pressures, inexperience and weaknesses in the present standards regime. It also records the lived experiences of officers and members across the sector.

2.4 Part II sets out a blueprint for change containing more than 40 recommendations directed at central government, sector bodies, councils, councillors and senior officers. The recommendations combine support for a

stronger statutory standards regime with practical action on culture, governance, induction and training, member-officer awareness, social media and online abuse, leadership wellbeing and resilience, and early identification of organisational warning signs.

2.5 Two practical tools are included: a Healthy Culture and Governance Audit and a Leadership Wellbeing and Resilience Audit. These are intended to assist authorities in assessing their arrangements proactively rather than relying solely on formal complaints after relationships or conduct have deteriorated.

2.6 From the perspective of the Committee, Monitoring Officer and wider governance perspective, the report is relevant to the Council's duty under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct, but its significance is not confined to legal compliance. It supports a preventative approach in which standards arrangements are connected with member development, officer-member protocols, whistleblowing and speaking-up arrangements, workforce wellbeing, governance assurance and organisational culture.

2.7 The report does not itself change the law or create new duties. The Council's existing statutory framework and locally adopted Code of Conduct remain in force. However, the report provides a useful sector benchmark against which local arrangements may be reviewed, particularly as the Government continues to consider reform of the national standards regime.

2.8 It is proposed that officers consider the recommendations and audit tools alongside future national developments and identify whether any proportionate changes should be proposed to the Council's standards, governance, training or assurance arrangements. Any substantive changes would be brought through the appropriate constitutional and decision-making processes.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 No immediate decision on amendments to the Council's arrangements is required. The recommended approach is to note the report and use it as a source of sector learning when reviewing the Council's Code of Conduct, complaints arrangements, member development, member-officer protocols, governance assurance and organisational culture.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 N/A

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Officers will review the report's recommendations and practical tools alongside the Council's existing governance and standards arrangements. Further reports will be brought to the Committee where national developments or the local review indicate that changes should be considered.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from noting this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 Sections 27 and 28 of the Localism Act 2011 remain the principal statutory basis for the Council's member standards arrangements. Section 27 requires the Council to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members, while section 28 requires the adoption of a Code of Conduct and arrangements for dealing with allegations of breach.

7.2 The Solace report is not statutory guidance and does not alter those legal duties. Its recommendations are nevertheless relevant to the effective discharge of the Council's existing duty to promote and maintain high standards and to the wider governance responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no immediate human resources implications arising from this update. The report highlights potential workforce impacts of poor behaviour, including wellbeing, recruitment and retention. Any future proposals concerning training, support or organisational development would be considered with Human Resources.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 No direct implications have been identified at this stage.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The report identifies that poor behaviour may have differential impacts. Any local review or proposed change should therefore have regard to the public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and to the need for fair, transparent and proportionate arrangements protecting complainants, witnesses and subject members.

11. Implications for Partners

11.1 The issues addressed by the report concern the wider local government system and are relevant to elected members, officers, town and parish councils, representative bodies and partner organisations.

12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 The principal risk is that poor conduct or deteriorating relationships are treated only as isolated complaints rather than as indicators of wider cultural or governance weakness. Mitigation includes maintaining effective standards arrangements, promoting early intervention, supporting ethical leadership,

monitoring national developments and using the Solace recommendations and audit tools as part of proportionate governance assurance.

13. Accountable Officer(s)

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