

Agenda

Standards Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday, 24 March 2026

Time 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Monique Bonney, Angela Harrison (Chair), James Hunt (Vice-Chair), Mark Last, Charlie Miller, Pete Neal, Tom Nundy, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ashley Shiel and Ashley Wise.

Independent Persons (non-voting): Patricia Richards and Christopher Webb.

Kent Association of Local Councils representative (non-voting): Parish Councillor Mike Baldock.

Quorum = 3

Pages

Recording and Privacy Notice

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1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Visitors and members of the public who are unfamiliar with the building and procedures are advised that:

- (a) The fire alarm is a continuous loud ringing. In the event that a fire

drill is planned during the meeting, the Chair will advise of this.

- (b) Exit routes from the chamber are located on each side of the room, one directly to a fire escape, the other to the stairs opposite the lifts.
- (c) In the event of the alarm sounding, leave the building via the nearest safe exit and gather at the assembly point on the far side of the car park. Do not leave the assembly point or re-enter the building until advised to do so. Do not use the lifts.
- (d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2025 (Minute Nos. [321 - 340](#)) as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or friends.

The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

- 5. Annual Update Complaints received under the Member Code of Conduct 5 - 10
- 6. Update on DBS Checks - verbal update
- 7. Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England - verbal update
- 8. Recruitment of Independent Persons - verbal update

Issued on 16 March 2026

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in alternative formats. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, please contact democraticservices@swale.gov.uk. To find out more about the work of this meeting, please visit www.swale.gov.uk.

**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Standards Committee	
Meeting Date	24 March 2026
Report Title	Yearly update on complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct
EMT Lead	Robin Harris – Monitoring Officer
Head of Service	
Lead Officer	
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. That the Committee note the update on complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on complaints, received under the Members' Code of Conduct, for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. This is set out at Appendix I of the report.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires that all councils adopt a Code of Conduct and that the adopted Code must be based upon the Nolan Principles of Conduct in Public Life. This requirement also applies to parish and town councils in the Swale area and all have adopted a Code of Conduct.
- 2.2 Under the Localism Act 2011, the borough council ('Swale Borough Council') is responsible for dealing with any complaints made under the Members' Code of Conduct against borough, parish and town council Members throughout the Swale area. The arrangements for dealing with complaints that have been adopted by Swale Borough Council also apply in cases concerning parish and town councils.
- 2.3 Each year, the Monitoring Officer provides an update to the Standards Committee regarding Code of Conduct complaints. The update omits the identities of the complainant and the subject member because the Localism Act 2011 repealed the previous statutory process under which names were published. In the absence of that statutory process, the Data Protection Act 2018 requires the names to be kept confidential.
- 2.4 Swale Borough Council has resolved that oversight of the complaints process for Members falls within the remit of the Standards Committee.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The Committee is requested to note the update on complaints received in relation to the Members' Code of Conduct.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The Committee may decide that they no longer wish to receive updates on complaints received in relation to the Code of Conduct. This is not recommended as it is part of the Committee's general oversight function.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 N/A

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	No implications identified at this stage.
Financial, Resource and Property	If a complaint proceeds to investigation, it may be carried out by an external investigator. If this is the case, there will be an irrecoverable cost to the Council.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	It is a requirement under the Localism Act 2011 that all councils adopt a Code of Conduct and that the adopted Code must be based upon the Nolan Principles of Conduct in Public Life. The Members' Code of Conduct can be found within Part 4 of the Council's Constitution. Gary Rowland – Team Leader Corporate Governance 10 March 2026
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	Data will be held and processed in accordance with the data protection principles contained in the Data Protection Act 2018.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix I: Table of complaints received for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025.

8 Background Documents

N/A

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Reference	Date Complaint Received	Subject Member Capacity		Detail of the Complaint	Final Decision
		SBC Councillor	Parish Councillor		
001-25	06/01/25		X	Allegation of harrassment.	Subsequent information was sought from the complainant but not received. No further action was taken.
002-25	09/05/25		X	Allegation of general issues with behaviour at parish meetings.	Sufficient evidence of potential breach of the Code. The Clerk was asked to liaise with KALC to explore mediation/conciliation.
003-25	26/06/25		X	Allegation of general issues with behaviour at parish meetings.	Insufficient evidence of potential breach of the Code. There was a clear need to improve working relationships at the parish council. KALC were therefore asked to consider providing general mediation/conciliation.
004-25	09/07/25	X		Allegation of general issues with behaviour and lack of communication.	Sufficient evidence of potential breach of the Code. The Subject Member had already issued a written apology so no further action was taken.
005-25	08/09/25		X	Allegation of disrespectful language.	Sufficient evidence of potential breach of the Code in relation to one specific allegation. The Clerk was asked to arrnage social media training for the Subject Member.
006-25	14/09/25	X		Allegation of intimidating behaviour and being unduly forceful with Members at meetings.	Having considered the evidence, the Monitoring Officer was not satisfied that the initial assessment criteria of 'The complaint, if proven, would be a breach of the Code under which the Member was operating at the time of the alleged misconduct' was not met. No further action was taken.
007-25	16/09/25	X		Allegations of coercive behaviour, dismissal of concerns and questionable pause in proceedings during a meeting.	Insufficient evidence of a potential breach of obligation in relation to the allegations of corruption and no prospect of any further evidence becoming available. No further action was taken.
008-25	17/09/25	X		Allegations of coercive behaviour, dismissal of concerns and questionable pause in proceedings during a meeting.	Insufficient evidence of a potential breach of obligation in relation to the allegations of corruption and no prospect of any further evidence becoming available. No further action was taken.
009-25	18/09/25	X		Allegations of coercive behaviour, dismissal of concerns and questionable pause in proceedings during a meeting.	Insufficient evidence of a potential breach of obligation in relation to the allegations of corruption and no prospect of any further evidence becoming available. No further action was taken.
010-25	20/09/25		X	Allegation of offensive and disrespectful language.	Insufficient evidence that the Subject Member was acting in capacity at the time of the alleged behaviour. No further action was taken.
011-25	01/10/25	X		Allegations of coercive behaviour, dismissal of concerns and questionable pause in proceedings during a meeting.	Insufficient evidence of a potential breach of obligation in relation to the allegations of corruption and no prospect of any further evidence becoming available. No further action was taken.
012-25	20/10/25		X	Allegation of slander.	TBA from Robin
013-25	30/10/25	X		Allegation of disrespectful language and behaviour.	Insufficient evidence received. No further action was taken.

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