

Brighton & Hove City Council

Audit Standards & General Purposes Committee

Agenda Item 13

Subject: Standards Update

Date of meeting: 23 June 2026

Report of: Elizabeth Culbert, Director – Governance & Law and
Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: Name: Victoria Simpson, Senior Lawyer – Corporate Law
Email: Victoria.Simpson@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 To provide an update on Standards-related matters, including in relation to complaints alleging that Members have breached the Council's [Code of Conduct for Members](#).

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Committee agrees to note the contents of this Report, including the information provided regarding the Independent Persons appointments.

3. Context and background information

3.1 The Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to have in place arrangements for dealing with complaints against elected and co-opted Members. Brighton & Hove City Council reviews its arrangements regularly and publishes them on its website. It also makes data on member complaints available to the public via quarterly reports such as this one.

3.2 The Audit, Standards and General Purposes Committee has delegated authority for leading in discharging the statutory requirement that the Council maintain and promote high standards of conduct by Members. This Committee receives quarterly reports on complaints against members to provide reassurance that complaints are being considered and dealt with in accordance with the Council's processes. This Report appends data on complaints both reported as outstanding at the time of the last Report, and those which have been received since then.

3.3 Members are asked to note the contents of the Report and to make any comments or suggestions they wish.

4. Quarterly report on Member complaints

Progress on complaints previously reported to this Committee

- 4.1 This data is provided in Appendix 1, at table 1.

Progress on new complaints received in since the last update

- 4.2 This data is provided in Appendix 1, at table 2.
- 4.3 The complaints referred to in this section are being progressed by the office of the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the procedure which governs member complaints.

5. Independent Persons appointed under the Localism Act 2011

- 5.1 The Council is required to appoint at least one 'independent person' to provide input at key points during the determination of complaints against members. At this Council, we are fortunate in the calibre of appointees we have been able to attract. They are normally three in number, this amongst other things to reflect the fact that they provide a greater degree of input in this area than is statutorily required.
- 5.1 At time of writing, two independent persons remain in post: Barbara Beardwell and David Bradly KC. However Mr Bradly is nearing the end of his tenure, which expires in October 2026. This Committee will be asked to note that fact at its next meeting and to acknowledge the significant and much-valued contribution he has made in the role.
- 5.1 Efforts to recruit two new independent persons as a priority via an open application process were begun last month and resulted in a number of well-qualified persons coming forward. Following a recruitment process which resulted in the identification of several appointable applicants, two preferred candidates were identified: Dean Spears and Paul Cummins. Both are already appointed as independent persons for other local authorities and each has a professional skillset considered to be well-suited to this role - including inarguable strengths in the area of governance.
- 5.1 Full Council approval is required to formally appoint the successful applicants. While that approval will be sought at the scheduled meeting in July 2026, this Committee is asked to note the information provided above as the body with oversight for this area.

6. Proposed changes to the standards regime

- 6.1 Committee has previously been made aware of the Government's response to the consultation on its proposals to substantively reform the member complaint regime. The Government's stated intention to implement those changes has been noted by this Committee. There has been no further news regarding timescales since the Government announced its firm intention, and a watching brief continues to be maintained.

7. Member training

- 7.1 In accordance with the information provided to the last meeting of this Committee, further alternative Standards refresher training slots were offered to all elected and co-opted voting members of the Council during the month of May.

8. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 8.1 The Council is obliged under the Localism Act to make arrangements for maintaining high standards of conduct among members and to make arrangements for the investigation of complaints. This 'for noting' Report provides information as opposed to options.

9. Community engagement and consultation

- 9.1 None.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any activity in relation to monitoring standards and investigating complaints is met from existing budgets.
- 10.2 Any financial impacts that arise from the reforms proposed by government will be assessed and reported once proposals are published and understood.

Name of finance officer consulted: Haley Woollard Date consulted:
05/06/26

11. Legal implications

- 11.1 All matters of a legal nature that are considered relevant have been addressed in the body of this Report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted
28/05/2026

12. Risk implications

- 12.1 No risks other than the previously reported potential pressures of an updated member complaints regime have been identified.

13. Equalities implications

- 13.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this Report, which provides reassurance on the arrangements which have been developed with the need to ensure the Council and its members discharge their responsibilities with appropriate regard for equalities considerations in mind.

14. Sustainability implications

14.1 No sustainability implications have been identified.

15. Other Implications

15.1 No other implications have been identified.

16. Conclusion

16.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this Report, which aims to assist the Council in discharging its responsibilities in this area.

Supporting Documentation

[Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – data on member complaints previously reported to Committee (Table 1) and new Complaints (Table 2)