

North Yorkshire Council

Standards and Governance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 13 March 2026 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Clive Pearson in the Chair plus Councillors Nick Brown, Melanie Davis, David Ireton, Nigel Knapton and Peter Wilkinson.

Officers present: Christine Phillipson, Principal Democratic Services Officer, Jennifer Norton, Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer and Harriet Clarke, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Other Attendees: Independent Person Louise Holroyd.

Apologies: Councillors Kevin Foster and Mike Schofield and Independent Persons Gillian Baker and Richinda Taylor.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

169 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Kevin Foster and Mike Schofield and Independent Persons Richinda Taylor and Gillian Baker.

170 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11 February 2026

Resolved

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2026 were agreed and signed as an accurate record.

171 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Nigel Knapton raised a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to Minute 178 as the dispensation request concerned himself.

172 Public Questions/Statements

One public statement was received that did not relate to an item on the agenda and was dealt with under this agenda item and is detailed below.

1. Public statement from Christopher Dunn

"I wish to make the following statement to the Standards Committee, I wish to attend the meeting in person, acting as a citizen only.

I am an eighty year old, autistic male, retired teacher/engineer, and have experienced councillor standards procedures in two counties of England. I am aware of the 'Government Response to Standards (GRP), 11 02 2026.

The UK model code of conduct for councillors includes provision for the chair of any meeting to act in a quasi judicial role to remove or discipline so called errant councillors, yet there is no such disciplinary conduit for so called errant chairs, this I believe is unfair.

Any councillor can be a complainant, but if they are a chair it can appear to carry superior credibility of evidence, and if the chair acts in a complaining duopoly with the Clerk/Proper Officer, the weight/credibility of evidence could be overwhelming in disfavour especially towards a sole complained subject councillor, this I believe to be unfair.

Standards guidelines suggest that the complained subject can seek advice or succour from a council clerk, this avenue is impossible if the Clerk is a complainant, this I believe is unfair.

Most UK councils seem to 'divi up' membership of any committee in the same proportion of the party's proportion of the council as a whole, this I believe to be unwise and unfair.

So called errant councillors can be: extremely independent; have no party succour; neuro divergent; have no professional support; have no right of appeal; yet I notice that NYC legal officer recommends just 'noting' the Government Response Paper (GRP) ,despite it suggesting supporting succour provision as in para g (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (h), this I believe to be grossly unfair.

GRP. para 3.2 (i) suggests that there has to be MULTIPLE vexatious complaints before any action is taken, this I believe to be unfair.

GRP. para 3.2 b (viii) suggests 'independent' chairs, I believe NYC is probably at present unwise.

Please be fair to the lonely; supportless; hapless; independent councillor; they can be easy target."

An officer response to this public statement was received, as detailed below:

"Thank you for your statement to the Committee, Mr Dunn.

North Yorkshire Council's standards regime is based on the legislative framework under the Localism Act 2011 and national guidance.

The current model code of conduct for councillors applies to elected councillors and voting co-opted members when they are acting in their official capacity. An authority's standing orders may set out how a chair may conduct and control a meeting.

Anyone may make a complaint to the Monitoring Officer that a councillor may have breached the code of conduct. All such complaints are considered objectively in accordance with the Council's standards complaint procedure and assessment criteria and in consultation, where appropriate, with one of the Independent Persons for Standards, to see if any further action needs to be taken in relation to it. All Councillor complaints are treated on their own facts and whether a chair or a 'backbench' councillor makes a complaint does not necessarily attach greater weight - each case is considered on its own merits.

The Committee appreciates that being the subject of a complaint can be stressful. As explained in the standards complaint procedure, which is sent to all parties to a complaint, Subject Members are able to talk to one of the Council's Independent Persons for Standards about the complaints process should they so wish and other

support may be available, for example the allocation of a named officer to support the Subject Member through the process.

The Government has consulted on strengthening the standards regime and the Committee has been briefed on the Government's response to the consultation and its intention to introduce new legislation to reform the current standards regime when Parliamentary time allows. The Committee will review its regime in light of any future legislative changes."

173 Annual Report of the Standards and Governance Committee

Considered

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer regarding the draft Annual Report of the work of the Standards and Governance Committee for the municipal year commencing 1 April 2025.

The Committee had previously agreed that it would be helpful to publish an Annual Report on its work to the Council in order to raise the profile of the Committee and strengthen awareness of its work and ethical standards generally.

An Annual Report also assists in discharging the Council's statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct and also ensures that the Council has an overview of work undertaken by the Committee in discharging the Council's standards responsibilities.

The draft Annual Report for the year commencing 1 April 2025 was attached for Members' consideration and approval at Appendix 1 and would be presented to a future meeting of the Council.

The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report and explained that the report covered the work undertaken by the Committee to promote this standards regime, including a review of national ethical framework developments, training, a review of standards documentation, and dealing with complaints.

Members complimented the report as an accurate reflection of the work of the Committee over the last year.

Resolved

That the Standards and Governance Committee approves the draft Annual Report for presentation to a future meeting of full Council.

174 Temporary Appointments Report

Considered

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer presenting an update on temporary appointments to parish and town councils made under his delegated powers.

The Principal Democratic Services Officer explained that where parish and town councils become inquorate and cannot meet or conduct any business, a temporary appointment is made under Section 91(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 so that business can continue, and new members can be co-opted onto the parish or town council.

On 6 September 2024, the Committee delegated the power to make temporary

appointments to the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, in order to streamline the process.

The report outlined that six temporary appointments had been made since the Standards and Governance Committee meeting of 17 September 2025, which were to appoint Councillors Caroline Goodrick, divisional representative for Sheriff Hutton and Derwent, Nigel Knapton, divisional representative for Easingwold and Janet Sanderson, divisional representative for Thornton Dale and Wolds to Whitwell-on-the-Hill with Crambe Parish Council.

Councillors John McCartney, divisional representative for Osgoldcross, Cliff Lunn, divisional representative for Thorpe Willoughby and Hambleton and Mike Jordan, divisional representative for Camblesforth and Carlton were temporarily appointed to Eggborough Parish Council.

It was reported that Eggborough Parish Council had since been successful in co-opting new members onto the Parish Council, and that there was interest in the Whitwell-on-the-Hill with Crambe Parish Council vacancies.

Resolved

That Members note the report.

175 Approach to Sensitive Interests Under Localism Act 2011

Considered

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to review the approach taken to sensitive interests under the Localism Act 2011.

The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that under the Localism Act 2011, if a Member has an interest, the nature of which is such that the Member and the Monitoring Officer consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the Member, or a person connected with them, being subject to violence or intimidation, then the Monitoring Officer can agree that the interest is a sensitive interest.

If an interest is agreed to be sensitive, this means that the Member must still disclose the existence of an interest to a meeting and in the public Register of Members' Interests, but the sensitive details themselves do not need to be disclosed in the public Register. These sensitive details would need to be provided to the Monitoring Officer confidentially.

It was reported that the Monitoring Officer currently considers applications for sensitive interests from NYC councillors and town and parish councillors on a case by case basis. Common requests relate to employment or business interests, and home addresses or property interests.

Some authorities take a different approach to Members' addresses by treating them as sensitive interests by default, only publishing them where a Member specifically opts in.

The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the Monitoring Officer would have reservations about the Council adopting a blanket resolution that Members' addresses are to be treated as sensitive interests unless they say otherwise on the basis that:

- a) not all 90 NYC councillors and almost 3000 parish councillors are necessarily likely to be subject to violence or intimidation (the legal grounds for a sensitive interest);

and

- b) it is a statutory function of the Monitoring Officer to agree an interest as sensitive, not the authority.

Members were requested to provide their views on the approach to sensitive interests and raised the following points:

- One Member raised concerns about publishing councillors' home addresses due to their personal experience of threatening behaviour towards councillors and parish clerks. They felt addresses should not be publicly available to safeguard Members, particularly new councillors elected in 2027.
- In response, the Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that there are currently two mechanisms for withholding a councillor's address: on election nomination forms (where non-publication can be requested) and within the Register of Members' Interests (where a sensitive interests request can be made). It was highlighted that NYC applies a low threshold when considering sensitive interest applications.
- A request was made for information on how many of the 90 NYC councillors had chosen to withhold their addresses, and officers agreed to check this.
- Another Member supported the publication of councillors' addresses to promote transparency and maintain accessibility for electors. They noted that sensitive interest provisions already offer protection where needed.
- The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that, if the current 'opt-out' arrangements remain, newly elected Members in May 2027 could be encouraged to consider whether they wish to request sensitive interests for their addresses.
- The Chair suggested referring the matter to the Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety, which other Committee Members supported.
- One Member, who did not support treating councillor addresses as sensitive interests, emphasised the importance of transparency and resilience in public office. They argued that threatening behaviour should be dealt with as a criminal matter and noted that some residents may need to make contact with their Division Member in person rather than electronically.
- Independent Person Louise Holroyd expressed sympathy for Members who had experienced threats from members of the public. She supported withholding addresses where councillors felt at risk and suggested improving the reporting mechanisms for threats, potentially through the Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety. She also queried whether Member allowances could support enhanced safety measures, such as doorbell cameras.
- Another Member supported measures to protect councillors but felt that individuals intent on abuse would behave the same regardless of address publication. They preferred their own address to remain public so that residents could approach them directly with concerns.
- The risks associated with canvassing were highlighted, though some Members viewed canvassing as an inherent responsibility of representing electors.
- One Member noted the potential risks to family members if residents visit a councillor's home while they are absent. They suggested that alternative engagement methods, such as in-person surgeries, could provide safer opportunities for residents to meet councillors.
- Another Member emphasised the distinction between voluntarily engaging with the public through canvassing or surgeries and unsolicited contact at home.

It was proposed by Councillor Nigel Knapton and seconded by Councillor Peter Wilkinson, and unanimously agreed, that the Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety be asked to provide its views on the approach taken to sensitive interests under the Localism Act 2011.

Resolved (unanimously)

That Members consider the approach to sensitive interests and whether any changes in approach would be appropriate.

The Standards and Governance Committee requested that the Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety be asked to provide its views on the approach taken to sensitive interests under the Localism Act 2011.

176 Local Ethical Framework Developments

Considered

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to update Members on developments in the national ethical framework under the Localism Act 2011.

The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that at the previous meeting on 11 February 2026, Members were briefed on the Government's response to the "Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England" consultation with the Government intending to "legislate for a whole system reform of the current regime as set out in Localism Act 2011" when parliamentary time permits.

It was reported that there was no further update on this matter. Members would be kept informed of any developments.

The steps taken by the NYC Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety to promote Member Safety were indicated at paragraph 7 of the report.

Resolved

That the Committee notes the contents of this report.

177 Dispensation Request from Councillor Dadd

Considered

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer concerning a request from Councillor Gareth Dadd for a further dispensation from the Standards and Governance Committee, to take effect from the expiry of his current dispensation until the date of the next local government elections in 2027.

The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report and explained that on 17 October 2022, North Yorkshire County Council's Standards Committee granted a dispensation to Councillor Dadd to enable him to speak, vote and be included within the quorum at meetings of the Council, Executive and committees when considering business relating to the Second Homes Premium Policy.

The dispensation was granted as the dispensation was in the interests of persons living in the authority's area and it was appropriate to grant the dispensation. The dispensation was granted for four years and expires on 17 October 2026.

It was noted that the legislation regarding the Second Homes Premium Policy does not cover holiday lettings and therefore Council business does not directly relate to or affect Councillor Dadd's registered interests but in the spirit of openness and transparency, Councillor Dadd wished to seek a renewal of the dispensation, on the same grounds as

before.

The dispensation request form outlining the details of the request was attached at Appendix 1.

In response to the report, Members raised the following points:

- Some Members questioned whether a dispensation was necessary but acknowledged that seeking one would ensure transparency and openness.
- It was noted that a dispensation had been granted previously, and Members were encouraged to maintain consistency.
- Concerns were raised about granting dispensations for “grey areas”, although it was acknowledged that discussions on the Second Homes Premium Policy could stray into wider debate on property holiday lettings.
- Another Member felt it was appropriate for the interest to be declared due to Councillor Dadd’s role as the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Resources.
- One Member suggested that the broader approach to dispensations should be reviewed in more detail at a future meeting.

It was moved by Councillor Peter Wilkinson and seconded by Councillor Nigel Knapton that the Committee resolves the below recommendation.

Four Members voted for the proposal, one voted against and there was one abstention.

Resolved

That Members consider and determine the request submitted by Councillor Dadd as set out at Appendix 1 for a further dispensation to commence on the expiry of his current dispensation on 17 October 2026 and to last until the next local government elections in 2027, to enable him to speak, vote and be included within the quorum at meetings of the Council, Executive and committees when they are considering business relating to the Second Homes Premium Policy.

178 Community Governance Review Dispensation Requests

As Councillor Nigel Knapton had declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this item, he left the room and did not participate in the debate or vote.

Considered

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer concerning requests from dual-hatted NYC councillors who also sit on or clerk potentially affected parish and town councils for a dispensation from the Committee to enable them to fully participate in meetings of Full Council when considering reports regarding the 2025/26 Community Governance Reviews (CGRs).

The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report which sought authorisation from the Committee for similar dispensations to be granted for any further requests received by the Monitoring Officer after the Committee’s meeting but prior to the Council meeting on 18 March 2026. The report also sought a delegation from the Committee to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of Full Council, to grant similar analogous dispensations to dual-hatted NYC councillors who may be affected by

the 2025/26 CGR at any full Council meetings when the Review will be considered.

It was reported that Councillor Nigel Knapton had submitted a dispensation request to enable him to speak, vote and be included in the quorum at meetings of Full Council when it is considering business relating to the 2025/26 CGR.

The Principal Democratic Services Officer explained that all dual-hatted Members affected by the 2025/26 CGR had been contacted prior to the meeting.

Members thanked officers for the report and raised the following points:

- The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified the distinction between a paid clerk with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) and an unpaid parish councillor with an Other Registrable Interest (ORI). Where an ORI directly relates to the matter under consideration, the councillor may be required to declare the interest and withdraw from the meeting unless a dispensation has been granted. It was emphasised that both DPIs and ORIs require a dispensation if a councillor wishes to participate fully.
- One Member commented that councillors representing divisions affected by CGRs should be able to speak about their areas, although statutory restrictions were acknowledged.
- Independent Person Louise Holroyd advised that granting a dispensation for dual-hatted councillors would be reasonable, as requiring applications for each meeting would create administrative burden and could deter newer councillors.

It was moved by Councillor Melanie Davis and seconded by Councillor David Ireton that recommendation a) listed below be refused.

Two Members voted for the motion and two Members voted against and there was one abstention. As there was a hung vote, the Chair used his casting vote to vote against the motion of refusal. The motion was therefore passed.

It was moved by Councillor Peter Wilkinson and seconded by Councillor David Ireton that recommendation b) listed below be approved.

Four Members voted for the motion and one Member voted against.

Resolved

- a) That Members consider and determine any dispensation requests, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, submitted by dual-hatted Members who are members of/clerk a parish or town council which may be affected by the 2025/26 Community Governance Review, by the date of the Committee's meeting, for a dispensation until the next local government elections in 2027 to enable them to speak, vote and be included in the quorum at meetings of full Council when it is considering business relating to the 2025/26 Community Governance Review.
- b) That if the Committee is minded to grant any such dispensation requests received by the date of the Committee's meeting:
 - i. That the Committee is requested to authorise similar dispensations for any further requests received by the Monitoring Officer after the Committee's meeting but prior to the Council meeting on 18 March 2026; and
 - ii. the Committee is requested to delegate to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of full Council, the power to grant similar analogous dispensations, on similar terms, as may be requested by such

dual-hatted Members (and confirmed by them in writing) who are members of/clerk to a parish/town council which may be affected by the 2025/26 Community Governance Review, at meetings of full Council on 18 March 2026, 15 July 2026 and any other full Council meetings when the Review will be considered.

179 Complaints Update

Considered

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer presenting an update on standards complaints received.

The Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that between 1 April 2025 and 27 February 2026, 164 standards complaints had been received.

It was highlighted that this already exceeded the 133 complaints received from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Further detail on the complaint statistics was included at paragraph 5 of the report.

A detailed breakdown of the complaints statistics for the two full municipal years from 2023 were attached at Appendix 1 and a breakdown of complaints received for the current year was attached at Appendix 2.

Members thanked officers for the report and raised the following points:

- It was confirmed that complaint subject members were always notified of a complaint under the NYC complaints procedure.
- It was also confirmed that there were currently no live investigations over a year old.
- It was reported that the Monitoring Officer would provide an update to the Committee on Investigation 13 as soon as they are in a position to do so.
- The Chair as well as the Assistant Director Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer thanked all Independent Persons for their valued views and time.
- Concerns were raised about the workload for officers given the volume of complaints, although some Members noted their appreciation that the flow of complaints had slowed since 2023/24.

Resolved

That the Committee notes the current position on standards complaints received.

180 Standards Training Plan

Considered

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer presenting the Standards Training Plan for Members for 2026/27.

A report is brought to each ordinary meeting of the Committee for it to consider the standards training needs of Members of the Council and how best to meet them through the Standards Training Plan.

The Standards Training Plan was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

Resolved

That Members consider the Standards Training Plan for Members for 2026/27 and determine whether any amendments are required.

181 Standards Bulletin

Considered

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer's report attaching a draft Standards Bulletin.

The Standards Bulletin is produced periodically and circulated to Members and relevant officers of the Council to keep them informed of key developments in the standards regime. Members previously agreed that the Bulletin should be circulated to parish and town councils in the North Yorkshire area.

The Bulletin was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members commented that as Councillor Heather Phillips had been replaced on the Committee by Councillor Kevin Foster, this update needed to be reflected accordingly.

One Member queried the vacant Governance Officer position. In response to this, the Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that the position had since been filled.

Resolved

That, subject to any comments Members may have, the Bulletin be approved for circulation.

182 Work Programme

Considered

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer's report on the Committee's Work Programme for 2026/27.

The Committee previously agreed it would be helpful for the Committee to implement a forward Work Programme of its work, as far as this can be anticipated.

The Programme is a standing item on each scheduled ordinary meeting of the Committee and keeps track of matters that the Committee wishes to review.

A revised Work Programme was attached at Appendix 1.

One Member requested that the process of making dispensation requests be reviewed ahead of the 2027 elections.

Resolved

That Members consider and review its Work Programme at Appendix 1.

183 Any Other Business

There was no urgent business.

184 Date of the Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is Friday 19 June at 10.00 am.

Members were advised that an additional meeting would need to be convened in early July to consider the 2025/26 Community Governance Review stage two consultation results and final proposals ahead of Full Council on 15 July 2026.

The meeting concluded at 11.31 am.