

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the **Governance Committee** will be held on **Thursday, 23rd April, 2026** in the **Council Chamber, Forde House, Brunel Road, Newton Abbot, TQ12 4XX** at **10.00 am**

PHIL SHEARS
Managing Director

Membership:

Councillors Bullivant (Chair), Henderson (Vice-Chair), Nutley, Clarence, Palethorpe and Nuttall

Please Note: Filming is permitted during Committee meeting with the exception where there are confidential or exempt items, which may need to be considered in the absence of the press and public. By entering the meeting room you are consenting to being filmed.

A G E N D A

Part I

Governance Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee's Terms of Reference is attached to the agenda pack for reference.

Public participation and attending meetings

Information pertaining to public participation rules and attending Council and Committee meetings can be found on the following webpage: [Public participation and attending meetings - Teignbridge District Council](#)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Minutes**

(Pages 5 - 10)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8th January 2026.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

Information pertaining to the Members' Code of Conduct and guidance relating to declaring interests can be found on the following webpage:

<https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/district-councillors/councillor-conduct/>

4. **Code of Conduct Complaints Update** (Pages 11 - 14)

To update Councillors on the Councillor Code of Conduct complaints received.

5. **Member Training Log** (Pages 15 - 18)

To review the Member Training and Briefing log from January – March 2026.

6. **Governance Committee Annual Report 2025/26** (Pages 19 - 24)

To approve the Governance Committee Annual Report and recommend its adoption at Full Council.

7. **Constitution Review Working Group Update** (Pages 25 - 32)

For information, to update Members on the work of the Constitution Review Working Group. The notes of the meetings on 12th January 2026 and 26th March 2026 are attached.

8. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

RECOMMENDED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting of the particular item(s) on the grounds that it involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Part II: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public excluded

9. **Governance Committee Determination of Code of Conduct Complaints**

a) FS-CASE-718913067 (Pages 33 - 62)

Report of the Independent Investigator - Governance Committee determination of Code of Conduct Complaint (FS-CASE-718913067).

If you would like this information in another format, please telephone 01626 361101 or e-mail info@teignbridge.gov.uk

3.9 Governance Committee

3.9.1 Membership: All Councillors may be Members of the Governance Committee. The Committee has 6 members who are elected councillors and who are appointed at the Annual Meeting of Full Council. The Committee will also have up to 4 independent non-voting persons co-opted to support the work of the Committee in relation to its Standards remit.

3.9.2 Areas of Work: Its role is to advise the Council on the operation of its Constitution, Governance and decision-making arrangements, on the adoption and revision of the Members Code of Conduct and for monitoring the operation of the code.

(a) Governance arrangements:

- To review the operation of the Constitution, its Standing Orders, conventions, codes, protocols, calendar of meetings and working practices;
- To make recommendations to the Council to make changes to the Constitution;
- To oversee the Council's programmes for member development and training;
- To make recommendations to the Council on its Scheme of Members' Allowances; and
- To consider findings of maladministration and Public Interest Reports issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

(b) Standards:

In undertaking its responsibilities (below), the Committee may appoint sub-committees to deal with its business as follows:

- To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members;
- To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- To advise or train councillors, co-opted members and parish / town councillors on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- To be responsible for the Council's procedures for investigating and responding to complaints.
- To deal with the local filtering of complaints (including in respect to parish and town councillors), advise on declarations of interests and grant dispensation requests (where these are not dealt with by the Monitoring Officer under delegated powers);
- To conduct local hearings and determination of sanctions should a breach of the code of conduct be found; and in such cases:
 - a) the sub-committee membership be limited to 3 members of the committee, selected to sit on the particular sub-committee according to their availability;

- b) when dealing with complaints about a parish / town councillor, the subcommittee should also include a non-voting parish / town council representative; and
- c) at least one independent person should be consulted by the subcommittee (or full committee as appropriate) prior to determination of any complaint or otherwise as required by law.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

8 JANUARY 2026

Present:

Councillors Bullivant (Chair), Henderson (Vice-Chair), Nutley, Clarence, Palethorpe and Nuttall

Independent Person: S Geneder

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Keeling and MacGregor

Officers in Attendance:

Charlie Fisher, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Abbie Cook, Legal Assistant

Chris Morgan, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

Rueben Hodge-Brooks, Project Management and Performance Specialist

Trish Corns, Principal Democratic Services Officer

31. MINUTES

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Nutley and **SECONDED** by Councillor Nuttall and

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Phil Bullivant declared an interest in Item 5 on the Agenda, as the current Chair of the Governance Committee.

33. DISPENSATION - MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Councillor Bullivant introduced the item and the recommendations.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Palethorpe and **SECONDED** by Councillor Nutley and

RESOLVED

That the Committee agree to:

- 1) Approve the granting of a general dispensation to all Teignbridge District Councillors to be able to take part in discussions and vote in items of business relating to the Members' Allowances Scheme.

- 2) That the dispensations are granted until the next District Council elections, or until such time as the District Council ceases to exist, whichever event comes first.

34. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP)

Councillor Bullivant relinquished the Chair and Councillor Henderson acted as Chair for this item.

Councillor Henderson introduced the item to the Committee.

Councillor Clarence asked for clarification that only one Special Responsibility Allowance is paid to any one Member, which was confirmed.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Palethorpe and **SECONDED** by Councillor Nuttall and

RESOLVED

That the Committee recommend to Full Council that:

1. Travel for those receiving a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

Recommended

The existing practice as set out in Section 8f of the Constitution – Members Allowance Scheme as below be confirmed:

“The SRA is paid to recognise the additional commitment and time required to fulfil each role and covers subsistence and travel for attending meetings not listed in Appendix A.”

Outside the boundary of the District a separate travel claim can be made.

Justification - The Council should be consistent with the norm of other South West Councils as above

2. SRA for the Chair of the new Governance Committee

Recommended

The SRA for the Chair of the Governance Committee continue and be set at the current SRA of £3,159.71.

Justification – This is a reasonable remuneration given comparison with and responsibility of other SRA positions.

3. Annual review of expenditure and benchmarking

Recommended

There be no increase in the Council's Basic Allowance other than the annual increase in line with Local Authority employee pay increase.

Justification - The Basic Allowance for Teignbridge is acceptable given comparisons with other SW Districts. Benchmarking evidence 7 of the 14 SW Districts have a BA less than the Council and 6 greater

35. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Legal Assistant gave an overview of the Code of Conduct complaints received since the last Governance Committee meeting.

7 complaints had been received, 6 were deemed invalid and 1 progressed to Stage 4 before considered that no further action be taken.

The Committee noted the update.

36. REFORMS TO THE STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

The Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer appraised Members of the Government's proposed reforms to the Standards Regime in England, as announced on 11th November 2025.

The Government intends to lay new legislation to bring in these reforms and repeal elements of the Localism Act 2011.

Councillor Palethorpe asked for clarification regarding the voting rights of Independent Persons who are currently co-opted, non-voting Members of the Committee. Officers agreed to respond to Members after the meeting.

Councillor Palethorpe also asked for clarification regarding suspensions and the 6-month rule for attendance, it was noted that the intended forthcoming legislation would give further detail and clarification on the proposals.

37. MEMBER TRAINING LOG

The Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer appraised Members of the Member Training Log, details of training sessions held since the last Governance Committee meeting. It was highlighted that Councillor's Profile Pages on the website now have a "Training" tab and sessions which Members attend are recorded on their profile pages.

Councillor Bullivant commented on the attendance figures of sessions.

Councillor Keeling asked for clarification regarding recording of external training undertaken by Councillors, and it was confirmed this could be included in their training records.

38. COUNCILLOR DIGITAL SKILLS FRAMEWORK

The Committee received a verbal presentation from the Project Management and Performance Specialist on the Councillor Digital Skills Framework.

The Digital Skills Framework sets a baseline of 11 categories of digital skills across all Staff and Members to support the digital transformation of the Council and to address any skills gaps and training requirements. Within each of the categories are skills that are required and levels of competency within those skills.

The Committee were given an overview of the Councillor's Digital Skills Requirements relating to skills, awareness of policies and proficiency using digital tools and systems.

The Council is also providing training opportunities for Councillors to improve their digital skills and ensure they meet the framework requirements.

Councillors discussed the framework and their experiences of using digital tools and training opportunities they have already taken part in. Councillors welcomed the opportunity to have further training.

39. COUNCILLOR DBS CHECKS

The Committee considered this item, as requested by Councillor John Nutley at the last meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Nutley spoke in favour of Councillors having the opportunity to have a Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) check.

Councillor MacGregor addressed the Committee in relation to the cost of the checks and the need for checks to be undertaken. Councillor MacGregor raised points regarding information handling, the legality of the checks and that they are a snapshot in time.

The Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer highlighted the agenda item was to gather the views of Members at this stage. DBS checks are not mandatory for District Councils, but an enhanced checks are recommended by the Government for Upper Tier and Unitary Councillors serving on committees which discharge education or social services functions. Many local authorities offer basic checks for all Councillors, including other District Councils in Devon on a voluntary basis.

The Committee and Members attending discussed the cost to the Council, the administration of the checks.

Councillor Palethorpe spoke in favour of DBS checks for Councillors as part of the Council's Safeguarding Policies and ensuring publishing a list of those who have undertaken an enhanced DBS check.

Councillor Clarence spoke of his experience as a Devon County Councillor and welcomed a voluntary DBS scheme. It was clarified that checks should be completed every 3 years to ensure they remain up to date.

Councillor Henderson spoke of his experience of Teignmouth Town Council and echoed the concerns regarding information handling.

Councillor Bullivant highlighted the Council's induction training and safeguarding training, and in support of checks as a public assurance.

It was confirmed that a further report would be brought to the next meeting to provide more information to Members and address their points.

40. CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Bullivant introduced the item and the meetings of the Constitution Review Working Group held since the last Committee meeting.

The Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer gave an overview of notes and the proposals due to be considered at Full Council meeting on Thursday 15th January 2025.

Councillor Bullivant spoke to this item regarding the proposed Councillor Role Profiles and recommended for Members to review those documents.

Councillor Bullivant asked for clarification regarding when the Working Group was due to be wound up.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.45 am.

Chairman

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**Teignbridge District Council
Governance Committee
Thursday 23rd April 2026
Part i**

Code of Conduct Complaints Update

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the Councillor Code of Conduct complaints received.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee RESOLVES to:

(1) Note the report.

Financial Implications

No financial implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arise from this report. The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to adopt a Code of Conduct which the Council complies with. Arrangements for the operation of the Code of Conduct are the responsibility of the Council.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Risk Assessment

No direct risk implications arise from this report, Breach of the Code of Conduct is Corporate Risk and the Committee contributes to the mitigation of this risk. The report provides an opportunity to report on the complaints received in mitigating the risk and their wider role in the Governance of the Council.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

No direct environment or climate change implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Report Author

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Executive Member

Councillor Richard Keeling – Leader

Appendices

1. Code of Conduct Complaints Update

1. Introduction/Background

At the Governance Committee meeting on Thursday 2nd October 2025, the Committee agreed that a regular update of Code of Conduct complaints would be reported to the Committee.

2. Main Body

The update is appended to this report.

3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

Implications and risks are covered on page 1 of the report.

4. Alternative Options

There is no legal requirement to provide and publish an update, but it is considered good practice and benchmarked to other Local Authorities to share the complaints received to discharge of the Council's duties to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members.

5. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to note the report.

Appendix 1: Member Code of Conduct Complaints received

Time period: Since the last Governance Committee – 10th April 2026

FS Reference	Date received	Complainant type	Subject Member(s)	Alleged breach	Summary of complaint	Current stage	IP consulted?	Appealed?	Summary
FS-Case-807904175	4 th March 2026	Town Councillor	District Councillor	Respect, Bullying and Humiliation, Leadership	Communication from Member breached duty to treat others with respect and bullying and humiliation.	Stage 6	Yes		IP recommended informal resolution.
FS-Case-810823171	11 th March 2026	Member of the Public	District Councillor	Respect, Bullying and Humiliation, Disrepute, Improper use of position	Social media comments from the Member regarding transgender people.	Stage 1			Awaiting further clarification from the complainant
FS-Case-811936888 3	13 th March 2026	Member of the Public	N/A	N/A	Invalid, related to the Housing Service.	Invalid			Forwarded to the Housing Solutions Lead.
FS-Case-817393189	24 th March 2026	Member of the Public	Parish Councillors	Respect, Impartiality of Officers of the Council, Disrepute, Use of Position, Complying with the Code of Conduct	Complaint against three parish councillors concerning a number of events, correspondence and meetings.	Stage 3			Awaiting responses from the Subject Member.
FS-Case-824551668	8 th April 2026	Parish Councillor	Parish Councillor	Use of position, disrepute.	Complaint against the Chairman of the Parish Council covering a number of areas, albeit some are not related to the Code.	Stage 1			Complaint acknowledged.

**Teignbridge District Council
Governance Committee
Thursday 23rd April 2026
Part i**

Member Training and Briefing Log

Purpose of Report

To provide a regular update on Member Development opportunities and briefings for Members from January to March 2026.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- (1) Review the report and consider any further developments to the Member Development Programme.

Financial Implications

No financial implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Risk Assessment

No direct risk implications arise from this report. The report provides an opportunity to publish the training and briefing events that have taken place to aid transparency of the Council's activities.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

No direct environment or climate change implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Report Author

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Executive Member

Councillor Richard Keeling – Leader of the Council.

Appendix

1. Member Training and Briefing Log – January to March 2026.

1. Introduction/Background

The Governance Committee has an ongoing role to review the Member Development Strategy and the delivery of Member Development.

As part of the agreed Member Development Strategy ([Member Development Strategy 2025.pdf](#)), the Committee are provided with a regular update on the completed training, learning and development opportunities.

In addition to this report, training and development opportunities are listed on Councillor's profile pages on the Council's website under a specific "training" tab.

2. Main Body

The Member Training and Briefing Log is appended to this covering report.

3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

Implications and risks are covered on page 1 of the report.

4. Alternative Options

There is no legal requirement to publish this information, publishing the information provides a transparent overview of the councillor training available.

5. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to review the report and consider any further developments to the Member Development Programme.

Appendix 1: Member Training and Briefing Log

January – March 2026

Date	Training/Briefing Session	Audience	Attendance	Feedback and Evaluation (if collected)
28 th January 2026	Planning Committee Training	Planning Committee Members	4	
2 nd February 2026	Teignmouth Lido Briefing	All Members	18	
17 th February 2026	National Planning Policy Framework Briefing and Training	All Members	14	
25 th February 2026			9	
24 th March 2026	Crisis and Resilience Fund Briefing	All Members	7	
31 st March 2026	Renters Rights Act Briefing	All Members	14	

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**Teignbridge District Council
Governance Committee
Thursday 23rd April 2026
Part i**

Governance Committee Annual Report 2025-2026

Purpose of Report

To provide an annual update on the work of the Governance Committee.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- (1) Approve the Governance Committee Annual Report 2025/2026 and recommend its adoption at Full Council.
- (2) Agree for the Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer to make any necessary updates and amendments to the Annual Report before it is submitted to Full Council, in consultation with the Chair.

Financial Implications

No financial implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arise from this report. The Committee acts to discharge the Council's duties under Section 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Risk Assessment

No direct risk implications arise from this report, Breach of the Code of Conduct is Corporate Risk and the Committee contributes to the mitigation of this risk. The report provides an opportunity to share the work of the Committee in mitigating the risk and their wider role in the Governance of the Council.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

No direct environment or climate change implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Report Author

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk

Abbie Cook – Legal Assistant

abbie.cook@teignbridge.gov.uk

Elliot Brice – Democratic Services Work Experience Student

Executive Member

Councillor Richard Keeling – Leader.

Appendices

1. Governance Committee Annual Report 2025-2026.

1. Introduction/Background

The Committee is asked to approve the Governance Committee Annual Report 2025-2026 and recommend its adoption at Full Council.

2. Main Body

The Annual Report is appended to this covering report.

3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

Implications and risks are covered on page 1 of the report.

4. Alternative Options

There is no legal requirement to provide an Annual Report, but it is considered good practice to share the work of the Committee in discharge of the Council's duties to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members.

5. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to approve the Governance Committee Annual Report 2025-2026 and recommend its adoption at Full Council.

Governance Committee Annual Report 2025/26

1. Foreword

Since being established by Full Council, the Committee with members from all parties has met regularly with an agenda to identify and suggest appropriate changes to the Council's Constitution.

Combining the Standards Committee and the Procedures Committee into the Governance Committee has allowed Members to have a wider oversight of the governance of the Council and issues that are important to Members and about Members.

As seen in Section 5, in just a few meetings, the Committee has achieved a lot over the past year, firstly to formalise its working arrangements and then to improve the transparency of its work and then its usual business.

As Chair of the Governance Committee, I wish to thank all those involved in the important work of the Committee.

Councillor Phil Bullivant, Chair of the Governance Committee

2. Introduction

This Annual Report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Governance Committee during the 2025/26 municipal year. The Committee is responsible for advising the Council on the operation of its Constitution, Governance and decision-making arrangements, the Council's Member Development programme, on the adoption and revision of the Members' Code of Conduct and for monitoring the operation of the code.

The Committee was formally constituted following a decision by Full Council on Tuesday 29th July 2025 to merge the former Standards and Procedures Committees into the Governance Committee.

In the 2025/26 Municipal Year, the Committee met on 4 occasions:

1. 2nd July 2025 (as the Standards Committee)
2. 2nd October 2025
3. 8th January 2026
4. 23rd April 2026

3. Role and Purpose of the Governance Committee

The Governance Committee's responsibilities include:

- To review the operation of the Constitution, Standing Orders, conventions, codes, protocols, calendar of meetings and working practices.
- To make recommendations to the Council to make changes to the Constitution.

- To oversee the Council's programmes for member development and training.
- To make recommendations to the Council on its Scheme of Members' Allowances.
- To consider of maladministration and Public Interest Reports issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- To act as the appropriate Committee to deal with Code of Conduct Complaints against Members to discharge the Council's duty under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 by:
 - Monitoring the effectiveness of the Member Code of Conduct.
 - Promoting high standards of ethical behaviour.
 - Considering allegations of misconduct and determining appropriate action.

The Committee is primarily supported by the Monitoring Officer, Legal Services and Democratic Services in carrying out its work.

4. Membership of the Committee

- Chair: Councillor Phil Bullivant
- Vice Chair: Councillor Andy Henderson
- Councillors Chris Clarence, John Nutley, Charles Nuttall and David Palethorpe.
- Independent Person(s) (not voting): Sandra Geneder, Hazel Elliott and Dr Geraldine Sharp.

The contribution of the Independent Persons continues to be invaluable in ensuring fairness, proportionality, and transparency in the Code of Conduct complaint process.

N.B. Councillor Charles Nuttall was Chair of the Committee and Councillor Phil Bullivant was Vice Chair of the Committee from 20th May to 29th July 2025. After being appointed to the Executive Committee, Councillor Nuttall relinquished the Chair and Councillor Phil Bullivant was appointed as Chair of the Committee on 29th July 2025, and Councillor Andy Henderson as Vice Chair.

5. Work of the Committee in 2025/26

During the year, the Committee:

- Reviewed the Appeal System within the Code of Conduct Complaints process.
- Confirmed of the Committee Terms of Reference.
- Determined of four Code of Conduct Complaints after independent investigation.
- Agreed a schedule of meetings and to meet quarterly.
- Approved the Arrangements under the Code of Conduct complaints procedure to accompany the Code of Conduct complaints procedure.
- Agreed to publish an Annual Report of the Governance Committee
- Agreed a regular publication of Code of Conduct complaints information to Committee meetings.
- Agreed to webcast Governance Committee meetings, improving the transparency of meetings.

- Agreed to grant dispensations to Councillors in relation to Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution.
- Reviewed the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter 2024/2025
- Received regular updates on the work of the Constitution Review Working Group, publishing the notes of the Working Group to improve the transparency of the Group.
- Agreed to grant a general dispensation in relation to the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- Agreed recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and recommended these to Full Council for adoption.
- Considered the proposed reforms to the Standards Regime in England and the implications for these for the Council.
- Consideration of the introduction of a Councillor Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks scheme for Members.

6. Code of Conduct Complaints and Casework

6.1 Overview

By law, the Council must make arrangements to investigate and determine allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct. As a District Council, we also do this on behalf of Town and Parish Councils in the Teignbridge area.

In the 2025/26 Municipal Year:

- **31** complaints received about Member Conduct (this includes District, Town and Parish Councillors)
- **22** were resolved through no further action or were invalid complaints
- **2** were resolved through informal resolution
- **1** proceeded to formal investigation
- **1** was determined by the Governance Committee
- **6** are currently at different stages within the process to be resolved and/or determined (as at 10th April 2026).

4 complaints received in the 2024/25 municipal year were considered by the Governance Committee.

6.2 Themes Identified

Whilst most complaints were based on individual cases, common themes across the year included:

- Use of social media and the balance regarding Member's Freedom of Speech and Article 10 Rights.
- Civility and respect amongst Members.

- Supporting town and parish councils with governance issues, which are not all directly related to the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer continues to encourage early resolution and acts to ensure fairness and appropriate decision making.

7. Training and Development

The Committee oversaw or supported:

- The adoption of the Member Development Strategy.
- Member Code of Conduct training in November 2025, attended by 20 Members.
 - Members rated the overall session 4.8/5.
 - Members rated if the overall session met their expectations 4.8/5.
 - Members understanding of the content (standards, code of conduct and interests) rose from 4.0/5 before the session to 4.7/5 after.
- Regular updates on Member Training and Briefings, including attendance at sessions and feedback on sessions are reported at each Governance Committee meeting.
- Consideration of the Councillor Digital Skills Framework, highlighting the proficiency of Councillor's digital skills and opportunities for further training.

8. Forward Plan 2026/27

Next year, the Committee intends to:

- Annual Review of the Code of Conduct Complaint Process.
- Review the Member–Officer Protocol.
- Consider the adoption of the LGA's Debate Not Hate Campaign.
- Consider any implications of the Government's proposed reforms to the Standards Regime.
- Continue to receive regular updates on Member Training and Briefing
- Continue to receive regular updates on Code of Conduct Complaints received.
- Following the winding up of the Constitution Review Working Group, take a more prominent role in reviewing the Constitution and recommending changes to Full Council.

9. Conclusion

The Committee wishes to thank Councillors, Officers, and Independent Persons for their contribution to this important area of governance.

CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP

MONDAY, 12 JANUARY 2026

Present:

Camilla de Bernhardt Lane (CfGS) (Chair)
Councillors Bullivant, Clarence, Palethorpe, Sanders and J Taylor

Apologies:

Councillors Daws, Dawson and Steemson

Officers in Attendance:

Trish Corns, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Charlie Fisher, Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

7. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 18 December 2025 were received and approved.

8. ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was noted that the Constitution items agreed over the last few meetings for recommendation to Council would be presented to the next meeting of the Council on 15 January 2026.

The issue of Shadow Portfolio Holders would be discussed with Group Leaders at the pending meeting.

9. SECTION 8E GUIDANCE FOR PLANNING

Consideration was given to an updated Article 8(e) of the Constitution which was discussed at an informal meeting of the Planning Committee on 16 December 2025.

Further discussion was given to paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2 and which were reworded as follows:

The need for Committee Site Visit

8.1 Site Visits are a fact-finding exercise for further information to address the planning reason(s) for the consideration of the application. Site visits by Planning Committees can be helpful in reaching a decision on issues where site circumstances are fundamental to the decision. However, Committee site visits can cause delay and additional costs for both the developer and the Council and should only be used by exception.

8.2 Site inspections are held only if:

- A. The Head of Development Management believes a site inspection would be beneficial in advance of the consideration of the application
- B. Requested by the Committee during the Committee decision making process

It was also agreed that:

1. The standard letter to interested parties to advise that an application is going to Committee for consideration should include advice that councillors may individually informally view the site and should they do it will be for observational purposes only and they will not be able to discuss the application with any interested party.
2. The Planning Committee trial digital named votes and the results be announced by the Chair.

10. PLANNING SITE INSPECTION PROCEDURES

Consideration was given to the circulated updated site inspection procedure.

The procedure was agreed.

11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Members viewed the presentation from Pandora Ellis (CfGS) on public participation and engagement.

It was noted that all public meeting agendas included the committee's terms of reference and links for information on public participation and attending meetings, in addition to existing information of the website.

The group discussed engagement with hard-to-reach groups, the current public participation scheme at Committees be reviewed, and that the definition of Committees on the website be reviewed.

It was noted that the District Councillors role included attendance at Parish and Town council meetings within their wards to feedback on district issues, and to hear what the issues are for their areas.

It was agreed:

1. The community engagement officer be invited to the next meeting.
2. The Chairs introduce officers at the start of all public meetings and councillors introduce themselves the first time they speak at a public meeting.

3. A councillor chat box on the website be investigated for the public to contact councillors.

12. NEXT MEETING

12 February 2026 2pm

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CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP - NOTES

THURSDAY 26 MARCH 2026

1. Attendance and Apologies

Present:

Camilla de Bernhardt Lane (CfGS) (Chair)
Councillors Bullivant, Clarence, Palethorpe, Sanders, Steemson and J Taylor

Apologies:

Councillor Dawson

Officers in Attendance:

Charlie Fisher, Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Kay Fice, Scrutiny Officer

2. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 12 January 2026 were received and approved.

3. ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed that Planning Site Visits would not be revisited as it was agreed by Full Council in February 2026.

The Monitoring Officer informed the group that many actions raised have been implemented as technically not constitution changes e.g. changes to the public website regarding public participation.

The action regarding Members to introduce themselves at the start of the meeting is down to individual Chairs to include.

The action regarding the chat box to be investigated, the Monitoring Officer raised that the topic of public engagement will be raised with SLT and to enquire about mail processes of opening and scanning councillors mail.

4 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND CALL IN PROCEDURE

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provided a recorded presentation of Call In procedures and best practice to include within the procedure.

Camilla highlighted some of the issues with the Council's current procedure including:

- No threshold

Constitution Review Working Group (26 March 2026)

- No timescales
- Needs to have a specific reason – material fact
- No mention of 5 members
- Must involve the advice of key officers when Councillors are intending to request a call in

Camilla posed a number of questions to shape the discussion and form a new call in procedure.

- 1) What decisions are applicable e.g. key/delegated?
 - a. Executive Committee decision
 - b. Executive member decision
 - c. Key decision delegated by Executive Committee to an Officer.
- 2) Time frame – 5 working days from the decision notice.
- 3) How will you know? Decision notices for will be circulated by email.
- 4) Who, how and what evidence? A form will be provided (to be designed) for Members to complete and send to the Monitoring Officer to include validity check and the requirement to speak to the relevant senior officer.
- 5) When? The call in will be held at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting to be convened at the earliest opportunity by the Monitoring Officer.
- 6) Where does it go to? If recommended to reconsider, all call ins revert back to the original decision maker to reconsider their decision.

Other comments:

- Members wished for the rules to included that decisions can be called in by 5 Members of the Council or 3 members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from more than one political group.
- Requests need to be in 5 clear working days before implementation.
- With regards to process and procedure, the recent Lido call in meeting seen as excellent practice e.g. suspending standing orders and allowing public speakers.
- Key decisions are spelt out in the Constitution.
- External or Special witnesses can be called with the approval of the Scrutiny Chair.
- The meeting should seek opportunities for public to engage if appropriate e.g. suspension of standing orders and the consideration of alternative venues if a different location would be more suitable for the particular issue to encourage greater and more convenient public participation.
- The procedure must be specific on what members are voting on to avoid confusion:
 - a) Upholding the original decision or
 - b) Upholding the call in and making a recommendation back to the decision maker
- The language used would be permissive in tone rather than have a restrictive tone.
- The information (not allowed and progressed) would form part of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.

The Working Group also spoke about rewording the meeting procedure rules to change the public speaking arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings to include:

- Representations to the Committee rather than submitting questions and having a supplementary question.
- These would be limited to items on the agenda only.
- Members of the public would still have 3 minutes to make their representation.
- Prior notice would need to be given to Democratic Services before the meeting
- Members of the public could speak under one agenda item or as part of the agenda item related, similarly to Planning Committee.
- The Chair would exercise discretion over the time allocated for representations.

5 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting date would be 16 April 2026 @ 2pm

- Review agreed actions and the draft call in procedure review
- Member Officer Protocol
- Access to Information
- Wrap-up and overview of the work of the Group.

N.B. This will be the final meeting of this Group as it will revert to business of the Governance Committee or via another route e.g. Notice of Motion. It is quite timely as both Camilla (and Ed Hammond) will be leaving CfGS to take up new Director roles at Grant Thornton.

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