

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

30 JUNE 2026

Present:

Councillors Bullivant (Chair), Henderson (Vice-Chair), Clarence and Nuttall
Independent Persons: Hazel Elliott and Sandra Genender.

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Bradford, Daws, MacGregor, P Parker and J Taylor

Apologies:

Councillors Nutley and Palethorpe

Officers in Attendance:

Charlie Fisher, Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Christopher Morgan, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

**49. MINUTES
RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the previous meeting on Tuesday 23rd April 2026 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
None.

51.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 -
EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair used their discretion to move agenda items 12 and 13 up the agenda to this point in the meeting. Members of the Committee were content with this.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Bullivant and **SECONDED** by Councillor Clarence and unanimously

RESOLVED

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.

**52. GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE DETERMINATION OF CODE OF CONDUCT
COMPLAINT**

The Committee considered the Independent Investigator's report regarding a Code of Conduct Complaint made by Mr Phil Shears about Councillor Jane Taylor (FS-CASE-694000403).

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The complaint, submitted on behalf of Officers of the Council, alleged that Councillor Taylor failed to comply with the Code of Conduct in that she made public statements which were untrue and which have publicly undermined the professional reputation of Officers. The complaint alleged that sections 3, 4.2, 5 and 10 of the Code of Conduct and section 2 of the Member Officer Protocol were breached.

The Independent Investigator applied sections 1, 2 and 5 of the Code. The Independent Investigator concluded that there had not been a failure to comply with the Code. They found that Councillor Taylor was challenging, created a difficult environment for officers, persistently asked questions and did not accept the answers and made statements which were blatantly wrong.

The Investigator commented that Councillor Taylor's Article 10 rights protected her rights to express opinions and this right is protected even if the opinion is based on incorrect facts as long as the Councillor believes what they are saying is correct.

The Investigator found that Councillor Taylor believes what she is saying is true and there is no justification to interfere with her freedom of expression rights as they are based on matters of political expression and public importance.

Councillor Bullivant introduced the report and the item.

Councillor Taylor made a representation to the Committee on the Independent Investigator's report, namely:

- That the Conclusion of the report was that there was no breach of the code of conduct.
- That the Committee should re-consider the evidence gave by Officer X within the report as it was inconsistent and that Councillor Taylor and Councillor Bradford's evidence should have been equally weighted and that the Independent Investigator should have considered it further.
- That the report's findings should be accepted.
- That if required, this report should be taken to a public hearing for further consideration.

At this juncture, Councillor Bullivant asked all those who were not Committee members to leave the room to allow the Committee to discuss the report.

Councillor Bullivant highlighted Councillor's freedom of expression rights, and their rights to express their views and that the conclusion of the report was that there was no breach of the code of conduct.

Councillors Henderson, Clarence and Nuttall also spoke to this item in relation to the Independent Investigator's conclusions.

The Independent Person(s) commented on the report and Councillor Taylor's earlier representation, pointing to the relevant sections of the report which showed that Councillor Taylor made similar points in her response to the draft report.

Following deliberations amongst the Committee and advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Committee had settled on its determination and invited those not present to come back into the Council Chamber.

Councillor Bullivant proposed and it was agreed unanimously to return back into a PART I meeting.

Councillor Bullivant summarised the discussion and repeated the conclusion of the Independent Investigator's report that there was no breach of the code of conduct. Cllr Bullivant noted paragraphs 261, 262 and 263 of the report in relation to Councillor Taylor's representation that the investigator had considered Councillor Taylor's response to the draft report and did not make any changes to his report as a result.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Nuttall and **SECONDED** by Councillor Clarence and unanimously

RESOLVED

That no further action is to be taken.

53. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2025/26

The Committee reviewed the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter 2025/26 to Teignbridge District Council and the information contained within regarding contacts, decisions and remedies.

The Ombudsman did not uphold any complaints relating to the Council in 2025/26.

The annual letter was noted.

54. REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Committee considered the report and an opportunity to review the code of conduct complaint process and arrangements for dealing with standards complaints guidance.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted the benchmarking exercise undertaken regarding appealing decisions and investigations with neighbouring local authorities. The Monitoring Officer commented on the number of appeals received but that having a lenient appeal approach (at Stages 2, 6 and 9) ensured confidence in the process that complainants know decisions can be reviewed twice and one of those by an Independent Person.

The Chair highlighted that our process which is lenient in allowing appeals at stages 2, 6 and 9 was not an issue as it allowed for further review.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Nuttall and **SECONDED** by Councillor Clarence and unanimously

RESOLVED

To accept the report.

55. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Committee reviewed the list of Code of Conduct complaints received since the last meeting. The report provided details of the complaints and their current stage (as of 19th June 2026). Further work has been carried out since the report which would be reported at the next meeting.

The Chair asked for an additional column to the table which showed if the complaint was active or had been resolved.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Nuttall and **SECONDED** by Councillor Clarence and unanimously

RESOLVED

To accept the report and the contents within.

56. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered the annual review of the Member Development Strategy, which was approved in 2025. The annual training programme had begun to be rolled out. The Council's Senior Leadership Team recommended that safeguarding training be included in the annual programme.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Nuttall and **SECONDED** by Councillor Clarence and unanimously

RESOLVED

To add mandatory safeguarding training to the annual programme of training.

57. MEMBER TRAINING LOG

The Committee considered the Member Training Log, details of training and briefing sessions held since the last Governance Committee meeting.

The Chair requested that additional information relating to mandatory training was included in the report for the next meeting to show how many Councillors had completed the required training.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Nuttall and **SECONDED** by Councillor Bullivant and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee review the report and consider any further developments to the Member Development Programme.

58. REFERRAL FROM FULL COUNCIL - ADOPTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION'S DEBATE NOT HATE CAMPAIGN

As recommended by Annual Council on Tuesday 19th May 2026:

“The Monitoring Officer report to the Governance Committee on the adoption by the Council of the Local Government Association’s Debate Not Hate campaign and in particular the Ending Abuse in Public Life Council Self-Assessment toolkit as a means of creating a culture of safety and respect for members within and without the Council Chamber.”

The Committee considered the report and the proposed recommendations within the report regarding the adoption of the LGA Debate Not Hate campaign.

Councillors asked for clarification regarding recommendation (f) and how the Council could report, monitor and review the safety of Councillors. The Monitoring Officer responded orally and highlighted that further information could be provided to the Full Council meeting where adoption is considered.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Bullivant and **SECONDED** by Councillor Henderson and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Governance Committee RECOMMENDS that Full Council:

- (a) Adopt the Local Government Association ‘Debate not Hate’ campaign and sign up to the ‘Debate not Hate’ public statement available on the Local Government Association website.
- (b) In doing so, makes a clear public statement that the Council is adopting a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, intimidation, and harassment of Members and Officers.
- (c) Asks for Officers to share the appropriate ‘Debate not Hate’ resources with all Councillors.
- (d) Agrees for the Chair of the Council, on behalf of the Council, to write to the local Members of Parliament and the Police on the Council’s adoption of the campaign.
- (e) Agrees that the Council continues to engage with the Police and Operation Ford, ensuring that Councillors are aware of the reporting mechanisms available to report abuse and intimidation.
- (f) Asks the Governance Committee report annually on the adoption of the campaign and review the safety of Councillors.

59. REFERRAL FROM FULL COUNCIL: MEMBER-OFFICER PROTOCOL

As recommended by Annual Council on Tuesday 19th May 2026:

“The Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service report jointly to the Governance Committee on a revised member – officer protocol to include clear guidance on:

- *Members’ rights to accessing Council information;*
- *Member visits to officer working areas”*

The Monitoring Officer highlighted that Full Council on 19th May 2026 agreed a revised Member-Officer Protocol and today’s meeting was to ensure that the recommendation was progressed and provide a further opportunity for Members to review the protocol if needed.

The Committee did not have any further comments.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Clarence and **SECONDED** by Councillor Nuttall and unanimously

RESOLVED

To recognise the revised Member-Officer Protocol agreed by Full Council on 19th May 2026.

60. CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The Committee considered the final two notes from the Constitution Review Working Group meetings on 16th and 30th April 2026.

The working group had now ended and any further revisions to the Constitution would take place via the Governance Committee.

The meeting started at 10.00am and finished at 10.50am

Councillor Phil Bullivant
Chairman