

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2026

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Present

Stephen Bolt – in the Chair (from item 2 on the agenda), Peter Dixon, Andrée Gee, Gail Harris, Tim Jickells, Tim Munday, and Gurpreet Padda.

In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Jonathan Goolden – Monitoring Officer, Emma Krelle – Director of Resources, Lorraine Taylor – Head of Governance, Joseph Balaam – Governance Officer.

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chief Executive welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The Chief Executive explained that the meeting was being audio-recorded. All recordings remained the copyright of the Broads Authority and anyone wishing to receive a copy should contact the Governance Team. The minutes remained the record of the meeting. He added that the law permitted any person to film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of public meetings of the Authority. This did not extend to live verbal commentary. The Chair needed to be informed if anyone intended to photograph, record or film so that any person under the age of 18 or members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed could be accommodated.

Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Appointment of Chair

Stephen Bolt was proposed by Tim Jickells and seconded by Andrée Gee.

There being no other nominations Stephen Bolt was appointed Chair of the Standards Committee for the forthcoming year.

Stephen Bolt took the Chair.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Tim Jickells was proposed by Gail Harris and seconded by Andrée Gee.

There being no other nominations Tim Jickells was appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for the forthcoming year.

4. Chair's announcements

There were no change in order of agenda items.

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5. Declarations of interest

Members indicated they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered, and as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

6. Items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

7. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. Proposed amendment to Member Code of Conduct – interest of Navigation Committee members

Members received the report of the Monitoring Officer (MO). The MO said they had received a number of dispensation requests from Navigation Committee Members in order to participate on navigation matters. The Committee, being a consultative committee, would be highly likely to include Members holding interests that could without the grant of dispensations prevent them from sharing their experiences and expertise on matters of which they held special knowledge.

Following evaluation on the number and nature of historical dispensations granted, the MO felt Code of Conduct amendment was necessary to enable Navigation Members to participate without seeking dispensation. The amendment proposed was 'for Members of the Navigation Committee only, consultation on navigation matters other than the level of navigation tolls, irrespective of the nature and extent of the interest'. The MO confirmed any interests the Member held would still need to be declared verbally at the meeting.

A Member asked if the proposed amendment would streamline the process in future. The MO confirmed it would and Members would not need to discuss whether they needed to seek a dispensation with Officers, and the MO on Navigation matters.

A Member asked if the amendment would apply to the two Navigation Committee members at Broads Authority meetings. The MO said this amendment would relate to meetings of the Navigation Committee only and would clarify this in the recommendation.

A Member commented that the wording in paragraph 7 and 8 of the report was unfortunate and did not understand the definition of wellbeing in this context. The Member hoped the wording could be improved and believed a bespoke code could be created. The MO suggested more practical advice could be provided to Members to clarify this in future Code of Conduct training and added that an explanatory note could be added to the Code of Conduct. A Member agreed that the term wellbeing lacked a definitive definition. The MO said there was a reluctance to depart from the Local Government Association model code unduly as a number of Members were subject to this code in their role as Councillors. The MO said

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deviation from the model code could result in Members being subject to quite different provisions whilst serving multiple authorities.

Peter Dixon proposed, seconded by Gurpreet Padda.

It was resolved unanimously to recommend to the Authority that the Member Code of Conduct be amended by the addition of the words “For Members of the Navigation Committee only, consultation on navigation matters other than the level of navigation tolls, irrespective of the nature and extent of the interest, at meetings of the Navigation Committee” to paragraph 9 of Appendix B of the Code.

9. Creating a framework for Member engagement with operational staff

Members received the report of the Head of Governance (HoG). The Chief Executive (CE) said the report recognised the Authority valued Members highly and provided them with the opportunity to see staff perform the Authority’s duties first hand. The CE also recognised the Authority had a large number of volunteers that contributed greatly to the organisation. The CE said this report sought to clarify the distinction between volunteers and Members who wished to observe operational staff.

A Member welcomed the report and encouraged Members to volunteer or accept the Authority’s invitation to observe staff for educational purposes. The Member said the clarification and separation was executed admirably.

A Member commented the report positively recognised the need for educational trips separate to volunteering.

A Member asked how this report linked to the Nolan Principles and Code of Conduct. The CE said the report did not conflict with the Code or Principles. The CE emphasised the need of Members to be aware of the Authority’s responsibilities and how it carried them out so that Members could perform their important role to the best of their ability. The CE added that the Authority was happy to facilitate work shadowing for educational purposes to enhance Members understanding. The Monitoring Officer (MO) said the report provided a structure for Members to become further educated on the work carried out by the Authority which would enhance understanding and enable Members to govern well as a result. The HoG said the Code of Conduct would apply to Members whilst volunteering.

A Member commented on the excellent standard of training given to volunteers. The CE praised the effort of the Authority’s volunteer coordinators.

A Member said they were excited by the Authority's advertisement for a Community Engagement Officer and commented that their non-profit work with children could compliment this. The Member expressed concern that engagement between the successful candidate and the non-profit organisation could create a conflict of interest, however, the CE saw this as a positive opportunity and believed that there was no conflict. The MO said other

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Members had previously used their role as a Member to educate young people on matters of the Authority and did not find issue with such engagement.

A Member sought clarification on whether the framework applied to Members of the Navigation Committee. The HoG said the report applied to Members and co-opted Members equally and would clarify this in the subsequent report to the Broads Authority.

Tim Jickells proposed, seconded by Andrée Gee.

It was resolved unanimously to recommend to the Broads Authority that the Volunteer Strategy was updated to provide guidance on Member volunteering and engagement as proposed in the report, with a minor amendment to include Co-opted Members.

10. Update on the consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England

Members received the report of the Head of Governance (HoG) and Monitoring Officer (MO). The HoG said the Government had published their response following the consultation, but no legislation had been passed at present. The proposals included the requirement for local authorities to adopt a mandatory Code of Conduct and improvements to disqualification criteria. The Government believed every local authority should have a standards committee and should protect whistleblowers. The Broads Authority already had a strong whistleblowing policy and a Standards Committee in place.

The MO informed the Members that the Government were yet to present the framework to the House of Commons and were waiting for parliamentary time to do so. Elements of interest included the right of review for both complainant and subject member, as well as individual support to complainant and subject member during the course of investigations.

The MO cited the Broads Authority as an example of best practice as the Authority had already extended the staff wellbeing programme to Members but advised thought needed to be given to supporting complainants.

The MO advised that the Public Office (Accountability) Bill (known as the "Hillsborough Law") could have significant implications for all public authorities and examination would be needed when this law and the new framework were introduced.

A Member asked if the Broads Authority was generally ahead of the curve when compared to other authorities. The MO confirmed this and said the Authority was in a good place.

A Member asked if there was any indication on the timescale of the legislative changes discussed. The MO said the Hillsborough Law was going through parliamentary process and expected Royal Assent by autumn. The MO expected the standards framework to be introduced to the House of Commons by autumn.

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A Member asked if the upcoming legislative changes would prevent the Authority from removing Members if they were required to do so. The HoG said the Authority did not have the power to do this and the legislative changes would not alter this. The Authority would only have the power to remove Members that it appointed.

A Member sought clarification on whether a Member who was disqualified from their appointing organisation could continue to serve on the Broads Authority. The HoG said a local authority Member who had been disqualified would not be able to serve on an outside body. The Member asked if an individual could potentially go through two separate complaint procedures, with their local authority and outside body, simultaneously. The MO said there was potential for this, however, the Monitoring Officers would usually assess the complaint and decide which authority would lead the investigation.

A Member asked if the Independent Person would be retained in the new structure. The MO said the Independent Person would be necessary to ensure fairness and would be consulted before a final determination is made on any complaint. The MO expected the Government would require co-opted independent members to serve on standards committees.

The report was noted.

11. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

12. Formal questions

There were no formal questions of which notice had been given.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 11 March 2027 at 10.00am at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY. Further meetings would be called as and when needed.

14. Exclusion of the public

Andrée Gee proposed, seconded by Gurpreet Padda.

The Committee **resolved by 6 votes for and 1 vote against** to exclude the public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public benefit in disclosing the information.

The recording was suspended.

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15. Member training – monitoring report

Members received the report of the Head of Governance (HoG). The HoG said the report was brought before the Committee to seek ideas on how to improve Members training attendance. The HoG drew Members attention to Appendix 1 of the report which highlighted the struggle faced by the Authority in attracting Members attendance to training, workshops and briefings. The HoG reminded the Committee that Members were expected to attend training sessions held by the Authority.

The Monitoring Officer (MO) added that, other than Code of Conduct training, only Planning Committee Members currently had prescribed mandatory training. The MO said it may be beneficial for the Authority to provide a distinction between training that was useful and training that was mandatory to Members. The MO highlighted safeguarding and sexual harassment training as examples of modules which should be mandatory. The Chief Executive (CE) said the Authority provided online training on these matters to staff members and believed this could be extended to Members. The CE believed that training on the Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMFSC) would also be of benefit to Members.

A Member commented that attendance should be a feature of annual appraisals and was disappointed to see that some Members had attended zero training sessions. The Member believed attendance statistics should be public record. Several Members agreed with this and believed it would increase accountability.

A Member commented that webinars might be useful to Members in order to fit training around their schedule. A Member said they appreciated online resources and recognised that not all meetings could be hybrid which would require further consideration.

A Member believed the table was misleading as some invites sent to Members may not have been deemed as training by Members and believed the Authority needed to make attendance requirement clearer in future. The HoG agreed that separation would be required between workshops, training and briefings and could be presented as separate attendance statistics.

A Member said some figures might be misleading in cases where absence was due to illness. A Member agreed with this and commented an asterisk would be useful in such cases. The HoG advised that extenuating circumstances were detailed when reporting attendance statistics to the Members local authorities.

The Director of Resources said it was disheartening when Members failed to attend sessions that Officers had spent a large amount of time preparing.

The MO said the Authority needed to ensure any mandatory training was easily available to all Members. The MO said it may be possible for the Authority to accept Members external local authority training on some aspects in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. The HoG said local authority Members had the option of watching a pre-recorded Code of Conduct training as they would have already attended Code of Conduct training with their local authority. This option was not available to other Members.

Tim Munday proposed, Seconded by Gurpreet Padda

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It was unanimously resolved that:

- i. The Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance recommend to the Authority the designation of essential training items as mandatory and report how this training would be delivered.**
- ii. Recommend to the Authority that attendance of mandatory training become a Code of Conduct requirement.**
- iii. Recommend to the Authority that Member training attendance records are published.**

The meeting ended at 11:27am

Signed by

Chairman

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Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Standards Committee, 19 March 2026

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Peter Dixon and Stephen Bolt	8	Members of the Navigation Committee.
Peter Dixon	9	Volunteer with the Broads Authority.