

REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE 01/2026/27

FULL COUNCIL 20 July 2026

Chair: Councillor Andrea Hodgson

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report arises from the Standards Committee meetings held on the 29 June 2026 and asks Full Council to consider the following:

- Appointment of Political Assistants and updates to the Constitution to meet 1989 Local Government and Housing Act requirements.
- Members Allowances Scheme for 2026-2027 update to reflect access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

2. **Appointment of Political Assistants and updates to the Constitution to meet 1989 Local Government and Housing Act requirements.**

The Committee were aware that following the local election results, there were now three political groups that qualified for a political assistant, and that all three political groups had expressed the need to continue to appoint to these positions.

We were advised that given the increase in the number of roles, there was a requirement to approve the establishment of these roles at Full Council for 2026 and to complete a review of how these posts offer value for money to meet government guidance. The timescale for the review was noted to be between August and November 2026.

We noted that there was also a need to update the Council's Constitution in respect of the Political Assistants appointments as this had not previously been reviewed. We noted that the Council's Constitution needed additional wording to more clearly set out these provisions for the political groups.

We noted the need to demonstrate value for money for these posts, and that the Council would undertake the required due diligence to ensure this value. However, it was explained, that, in the meantime, there was a need to recruit to these roles, due to the current need of the political groups. Following this, a review of the roles would be undertaken over the next year with a report compiled by November 2026.

Officers explained that the review into the role would consider different options of delivery, as well as benchmark how other Local Authorities undertake the role.

The following issues were discussed by the Committee:

- Support for the Political assistant role as a good point of contact and liaison between officers and Members. They also were an essential point of contact for councillors that worked or had other responsibilities during the day.
- Concerns regarding transparency of the Appointments Panel in considering the review outcomes of role of the Political Assistant as this Panel met on an ad hoc basis was set up to mainly make appointments and not consider terms of employment or reviews. It was suggested, and agreed, that the review be referred to Standards Committee with a report to Full Council from the Committee rather than the Appointments Panel, and we amended recommendations to reflect this which were outlined in the report.

WE RECOMMEND FULL COUNCIL

1. NOTE the current best value considerations for appointment of political assistants set out at section 7 of the attached report (appendix 1) for three political groups noting that there is a maximum of 3 positions that can be appointed to meet legislative requirements.
2. Taking into account the government Guidance which suggests that there should be reviews of these particular posts to ensure value for money, AGREE the appointment of three political assistants on a one-year fixed contract ending in September 2027 to allow a review of these roles between August and November 2026.
3. To AGREE a review of the roles, taking account the operation of the roles and whether they continue to provide value for money, particularly in the light of the Council's challenging financial position.
4. To AGREE that the review findings and final decisions on the terms and conditions of the appointments and contracts are delegated to the Standards Committee for final decision in November 2026, with a report to Full Council in November. This would be in time for consideration as part of the budget proposals if required.
5. To AGREE the updates to the Council's Constitution set out at Appendix 2.

3. Members Allowances Scheme for 2026-2027 update to reflect access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

We considered the attached report which sought to formalise the access of Members to the Local Government Pension Scheme which was made available by government legislation on the 11th of May 2026

We noted the assurances had been received from the finance team that the impact of the scheme from employer contributions would not be significant, due to the lower level of Councillor allowances.

We noted that advice on enrolment, and the implications of enrolment, could be sought by Members from the Pensions team, and it was additionally explained that there was a scheduled Member briefing session to explain the scheme in October 2026.

We noted that this was a static document and that this information would remain in the scheme and allow councillors to understand and have knowledge of access to the scheme on a continual basis.

WE RECOMMEND COUNCIL

To consider the updates to the Members' Allowances Scheme set out at section 6 and reflected at Appendix 4.

To APPROVE the updated Members' Allowances Scheme 2026/27 attached at Appendix 4.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Standards Committee Report on Political Assistants

Appendix 2 Updates to the Constitution

Appendix 3 Member Allowances Scheme report

Appendix 4 Updates to the Constitution Members Allowance Scheme