item 2

South Tyneside Council

Constitution Committee
19 March 2026

Present: Councillors: Dixon, Carter, Brenen, Cunningham, Lamonte, McKeown and Robertson

Lucy Keating (Director of Legal and Governance), Karen Connolly (Democracy Officer), and Jonathan Lunness (Scrutiny and Democracy Support Officer)

Apologies: Councillors: Proudlock, Potts

There were 3 members of the press and public in attendance.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of 15 October 2025

Agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. Annual Review of the Constitution 2025/26

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Lucy Keating, Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) presented the report which detailed work of the Annual Review of the Constitution that had been undertaken over the municipal year 2025/26 by Constitution Working Group.

Members noted the importance of ensuring that the Constitution worked for the Council.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part A contained within paragraphs 18-20 of the report.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part B contained within paragraphs 21-33 of the report.

It was agreed that a marked-up version of the Constitution would be circulated to members of the committee in advance of its consideration at Borough Council.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part C contained within paragraphs 34-35 of the report.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part D contained within paragraphs 36-45 of the report.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part D contained within paragraphs 46-47 of the report. Members noted that the operational safeguards detailed in paragraph 47 would be implemented to strengthen transparency and accountability.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation Part E contained within paragraphs 48-49 of the report. Members discussed who would judge if a Member shared misinformation. It was noted that any complaint under a breach of the Constitution or Code of Conduct would be assessed by the Monitoring Officer, and if necessary, determined at a hearing by Standards Committee. It was agreed to include the word 'knowingly' in the proposed wording of paragraph 49ii to read: 'Councillors must not knowingly share disinformation or malinformation…'.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part E contained within paragraphs 50-51 of the report. It was queried if the email contact for Operation Ford would be included in the Constitution. It was noted that discussions were ongoing with police as to the detail which to include, but that the relevant contact details would be shared directly with Members.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part F contained in paragraph 52 of the report. In relation to the reduction of Cabinet posts by one, it was noted that this would require a restructure of Cabinet portfolios by Leadership post-election. It was agreed that it would be made clearer that only for Committees where the Chair receives a renumeration would the Vice-Chair receive a pro rata amount if taking the Chair and would not include CAFs. It was queried if Member's attendance records would be published as like the training records. It was confirmed that whilst attendance records were available through the minutes of meetings which are published online, work was underway to ensure this was more easily accessible on the internet.

Members agreed to the proposal in relation to Part F contained in paragraph 53 of the report. A Member noted that a recent report to Audit Committee had found that no rules had been broken in relation to travel expenses.

Members agreed to the proposal in relation to Part F contained in paragraph 54 of the report. Members noted that in relation to the use of the civic car, it should not always be assumed that all Members use their own personal cars for business use. It was noted that it was for each individual Member to satisfy themselves regarding appropriate insurance of their vehicles for Council business.

Members agreed to the proposals in relation to Part F contained in paragraphs 55-56 of the report. It was agreed that communications would be issued to any Members claiming landline telephone allowance to ensure they were aware of the changes if they were agreed at Annual Meeting of Council.

Resolved: (a) that the report be approved and recommended for adoption by Full Council at the Annual Meeting in May 2026; and

(b) that the Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) be authorised to finalise the recommendations and proposed changes, together with a marked up version of the Council's Constitution, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Reasons for decision: *As a core tenet of good governance, the keep the Constitution under regular review to reflect experience and changing circumstances.*

4. Resolution to exclude the press and public

Resolved: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the agenda items as they involve exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

Minute no.	Item
5	4

5. Chair's Urgent Items

The Chair agreed to accept an item for consideration.

A Member raised the timescales associated with Standards Complaints. The Committee discussed the need for all standards complaints and hearings to be considered against the same deadlines.

It was agreed that this topic be included in the work programme for the Constitution Committee in the municipal year 2026/27.

Resolved: (a) that Constitution Committee consider the relevant constitutional articles in relation to standards complaints in the municipal year 2026/27.