



South Tyneside Council

Item 8a

Report on Standards Committee Decision Notice – Complaint C240

This document has been classified as: **Not
protectively marked**
Lucy Keating, Interim Director of Legal and
Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Council 30 July 2026

Report to Council

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Cllr Paul Mackings, Leader of the Council

Report of Lucy Keating, Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Subject: Report on Standards Committee Decision Notice – Complaint C240

Date: 30 July 2026

Wards affected: N/A.

Council ambitions: This will help us achieve all five of our Ambitions in all we do.

Does the report and any appendices contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?

- No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

For Executive Decisions only:

Is the decision a Key Decision? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? No

If not in the Forward Plan is the report: General Exception Rule / Special Urgency Rule

Relevant Scrutiny Chair:

Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? No

(If the decision is anything other than any executive decision made by the Cabinet or a Key Decision made by an officer under delegated powers, call-in is not applicable. This should be explained in the report).

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Council, at the first ordinary Council meeting following the Standards Committee hearing on 10 March 2026, of the findings and sanctions determined by the Standards Committee in respect of Complaint C240, to append the Standards Committee Decision Notice for information and to note the position following the May 2026 local elections.

Background Information

2. Under the Localism Act 2011, local authorities are required to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. This includes adopting a local Members' Code of Conduct and maintaining arrangements for considering allegations that a member has failed to comply with that Code.
3. The sanctions available to a local authority under the standards framework are limited. The Localism Act 2011 does not provide councils with powers to suspend or disqualify a councillor. However, where the relevant conduct occurred while an individual was a councillor, the Council may still issue a formal censure in respect of that former councillor.
4. The Standards Committee considered Complaint C240 at a hearing held on 10 March 2026. Following consideration of the investigation report and the evidence presented, the Committee determined that a number of breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct had been committed by former Councillor Robertson.
5. Specifically, the Committee found that Councillor Robertson had failed to treat officers with respect and decency, had bullied and harassed senior officers, had misused his position, had failed to comply with elements of the Member/Officer Protocol and Social Media Protocol and had brought his role and the authority into disrepute.
6. The Committee issued a formal censure and made a number of recommendations to Council, including that Council issue a formal censure, remove Councillor Robertson from the Standards Committee, not reappoint him to that position at the Annual Meeting of Borough Council in May 2026, impose training requirements and restrict direct access to officers pending satisfactory completion of that training.

Current Position

7. Since the Standards Committee reached its decision, the May 2026 local elections have taken place. John Robertson is no longer a serving councillor of South Tyneside Council.
8. As he no longer holds office as a councillor, the recommendations relating to Standards Committee membership, future reappointment, mandatory member training

and restrictions on access to officers cannot be implemented and have effectively fallen away.

9. The formal decision of the Standards Committee remains a matter of public record and the Committee's findings have been published in accordance with its Decision Notice.

Financial and Resources

10. None arising directly from this report.

Legal and Governance

11. The Council is required to have regard to the findings and recommendations of its Standards Committee. Whilst the Committee may recommend sanctions, the statutory standards framework does not provide councils with powers to suspend or disqualify councillors.
12. The conduct considered by the Standards Committee occurred while Mr Robertson was a councillor. It is therefore open to Council to issue a formal censure in relation to that conduct, notwithstanding the fact that Mr Robertson is no longer an elected member of the Council.
13. As the subject member is no longer an elected member of the Council, no further member sanctions are available or capable of implementation beyond the formal censure and publication of the Decision Notice.

Risk

14. No significant risks arise directly from this report. Failure to formally note the Standards Committee's findings and consider its recommendation of censure could, however, give rise to governance and reputational risks and could undermine public confidence in the Council's standards arrangements.

Equality and Diversity and Community

15. None identified arising directly from this report.

Environmental and Sustainability

16. The decisions recommended in this report do not give rise to any environmental or sustainability implications.

Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans

17. This report should be considered with the Council's Vision and Values in mind and demonstrate alignment to our agreed 'Council Values' that define what we stand for as an organisation and the things that are most important in terms of how we work and act in a way that is 'PROUD'.

Consultation and Engagement

18. The Standards Committee hearing was conducted in accordance with the Council's standards arrangements and followed an investigation undertaken pursuant to the Council's procedure for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct. The hearing considered the investigation report, representations from the parties and all relevant evidence before reaching its findings.
19. The outcome of the hearing was published through the Standards Committee Decision Notice in accordance with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency in relation to standards matters. No separate public consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report, as it reports the findings and recommendations of the Standards Committee and the subsequent position following the May 2026 local election

Recommendations

20. Borough Council are asked to:
1. Note the findings of the Standards Committee in relation to Complaint C240, as set out in the Standards Committee Decision Notice attached at Appendix 1.
 2. Issue a formal censure of former Councillor John Robertson in respect of the conduct found by the Standards Committee to have breached the Members' Code of Conduct.
 3. Note that, as Mr Robertson ceased to be a member of South Tyneside Council following the local elections held in May 2026, the Monitoring Officer will not commission the training outlined in the Decision Notice and the email diversion recommendation falls away.

Reasons for Recommendations

21. The recommendations enable Council to formally note the Standards Committee's findings, consider the Committee's recommendation that Council issue a formal censure, and clarify the effect of Mr Robertson no longer being an elected member following the May 2026 local elections. The remaining recommended actions are no longer capable of implementation, but the formal censure remains available in respect of conduct which occurred while Mr Robertson was a councillor.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Standards Committee Decision Notice

Report on Standards Committee

Decision Notice – Complaint C240

The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:

Background Paper	File Ref:	File Location