

Agenda

Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

Tuesday, 21 June 2022 at 3.00 pm
Committee Room 1, Sandwell Council House

This agenda gives notice of items to be considered in private as required by Regulations 5 (4) and (5) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

1 **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 **Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting**

To receive any declarations of interest from members relating to any item on the agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and/or S106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

3 **Minutes**

7 - 38

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 as a correct record.



Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL
Managing Director Commissioner
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution

Councillor Allcock (Chair);
Councillors Crompton, E M Giles, G Gill, W Gill, Jalil, Lewis and Rahman.

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Minutes of Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

**Tuesday 22 March at 2.30pm
in Committee Room 1, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Allcock (Chair)
Councillor W Gill, Z Hussain, O Jones and C S Padda.

Officers: Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager - Democracy), Maria Price (Service Manager-Legal Services), Vanessa Mahersmith (Governance and Business Support Principal Lead & Solicitor), Trisha Newton (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer).

13/22 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr John Tew and Mr Richard Phillips (Independent Persons)

14/22 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

15/22 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.



16/22 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

17/22 **Revision to Appointments to Ethical Standards Sub-Committees**

Further to Minute No. 25/21 (9 November 2021), at its meeting held on 1 March 2022, the Council approved changes to the membership of the Committee. It was therefore necessary for the Committee to revise the appointments to the Ethical Standards Sub-Committees for the remainder of the municipal year.

Resolved that the appointments to the two Ethical Standards Sub-Committees for the remainder of 2021/22 municipal year, with flexibility between membership to cater for availability and workload, with delegated powers to carry out the functions set out in the following terms of reference, be revised with the membership set out below:-

Terms of reference of the Ethical Standards Sub Committee

- To consider investigation reports referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.
- To conduct hearings (including the imposition of sanctions).

Membership

SUB-COMMITTEE 1		SUB-COMMITTEE 2	
Member	Substitute	Member	Substitute
Allcock	Substitute members taken from remainder of committee	Allcock	Substitute members taken from remainder of committee
Dhallu		Kausar	
Akhter		O Jones	
Z Hussain		C S Padda	
W Gill		W Gill	
+ Independent Person		+ Independent Person	



DBS Checks for Elected Members

Further to Minute No. 6/22 (22 February 2022), where approval was given to recommend to Full Council that members in specific roles be subject to an annual DBS Check, the Committee considered the draft DBS Protocol.

In response to questions, it was confirmed:-

- regular contact with vulnerable adults and children was defined as individuals over a period of 4 day over a 30-day period and a definition would be included in the Protocol to provide clarity.
- a template would be created to provide clarity around offences.

Resolved to recommend to Council that the DBS Protocol, as set out in Appendix A, and proposal to undertake annual Enhanced DBS checks for the following member roles and positions be approved:-

- The Leader
- Deputy Leader
- Cabinet Members for Children and Adults
- All Members of Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board and Health and Adults Social Care Scrutiny Board
- Members of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Any other Member who may regularly come into contact with children or vulnerable adults as part of their Council role.

Review of Protocol for Independent Persons Appointed under the Localisms Act 2011

In line with the review of the complete suite of documents relating to member code of conduct and arrangements for dealing with standards complaints, the Protocol for Independent Persons appointed under the Localism Act 2011 had been reviewed.



The protocol was intended to be used by Independent Persons who have been appointed under section 28 (7) of the Localism Act 2011, when undertaking their duties and made clear the role of the independent persons and their relationship with the authority and others.

Resolved that the revised Protocol for Independent Persons appointed under the Localism Act 2011, as set out in Appendix B, be approved.

20/22

Review of the Social Media Policy for Elected Members

The Social Media Policy was approved in March 2021 and a light touch review had been undertaken to ensure the Policy was fit for purpose.

No changes were required, other than minor amendments/typographical errors.

As part of the Member Development Programme, social media training would be offered to all members and, given this was a specialist area, options were being investigated for an external trainer.

Resolved that Council be recommended to approve the revised Social Media Policy for Elected Members, as set out in Appendix C.

21/22

Review of the Committee on Standards in Public Life Best Practice Recommendations

The Committee considered the review of the Council's current position and progress made in relation to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Best Practice Recommendations.



Following the Council's response to the recommendations and the review of the Member Code of Conduct and Arrangements last year, a further review of the Best Practice Recommendations had been undertaken to highlight the Council position and progress made.

22/22 **Annual Report - Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee 2021/2022**

The Committee was required to produce an annual report detailing the activities undertaken throughout the municipal year. The annual report would be referred to Full Council for consideration at its next meeting on 12 April 2022.

Resolved that the Annual Report of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee 2021/22 be submitted to the next meeting of Full Council.

23/22 **Gifts and Hospitality Register**

The Committee considered the Gifts and Hospitality Register and declaration of interests made by Members.

Following the Best Practice recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Gifts and Hospitality Register was a standing agenda item for meetings of the Committee.

No new entries to the Gifts and Hospitality Register had been made since the last meeting of the Committee.

24/22 **National Cases**

The Committee received and discussed details of national cases, as part of its learning and development.



25/22 **Complaints Update**

The Committee received details of complaints received in relation to member conduct and the progress on the complaints.

26/22 **Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Ethical Standards and Member Development Work Programme for the remaining 2021/22 municipal year.

Meeting ended at 3.15pm

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DBS Checks Protocol for Councillors

Introduction

Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority. There is no statutory requirement for councillors to undergo basic DBS checks. A basic check provides limited information and does not give a full account of an individual's criminal record as such the level of assurance provided by the basic check is limited. Consideration was given to seek all elected members consent to undergo a basic check but given the limited assurance provided by basic check there is limited value to this, elected members will not be asked to consent to undergo a basic DBS check.

Certain posts do however, have greater involvement with vulnerable adults and children, there is no statutory requirement, but there are eligibility criteria and the Council would need to ensure that the members concerned met the criteria. The criteria largely relates to 'regulated activity' with vulnerable adults or children. The Council would at all times work within the Government's DBS Eligibility Guidance, which can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance>

Enhanced DBS Checks

An enhanced check provides full details of a criminal record. This includes cautions, warnings, reprimands, spent and unspent convictions. It can also search the children and vulnerable adults 'barred list' to see if the applicant is prohibited from working with these groups. An individual cannot request one themselves only the employer/organisation can request one.

Enhanced checks are for specific roles with more regular contact with children and vulnerable people, there is no statutory requirement on Councillors to undergo these checks. The eligibility criteria for an enhanced check is defined separately for contact with adults and Children. For children 3 criteria must be met, 1. the Establishment your in should be a specialist environments that involves working alongside children (e.g. schools, academies, colleges, residential children's care homes etc), 2. The activity should be a regulated one i.e. working with children and 3. The activity is either 4 or more times within a 30-day period, or once or more times a week. Examples of regulated activities for Adults are provided in the table below:

Regulated Activity	Definition
Healthcare	Provided by any healthcare professional or under the direction or supervision of one
Personal care	Washing, dressing, eating, drinking and toileting
Social work	In relation to adults, who are clients or potential clients, includes assessing or reviewing the need for health or social care services and providing ongoing support to clients
Assistance with household affairs	Anyone who provides day to day assistance to an adult because of their age, illness or disability, where it includes managing the person's money, paying the person's bills, or shopping on their behalf
Assistance with the conduct of affairs	Power of attorney/deputies appointed under the Mental Capacity Act
Conveying an Adult	For health, personal or social care requirements due to age, illness or disability. This includes hospital porters, patient transport services, driver's assistants, Ambulance Technicians and Emergency Care Assistants. Please note transporting/conveying is not necessarily in a vehicle and could be in a wheelchair/stretchers

The following members will be asked to consent to Enhanced DBS checks, subject to meeting the DBS criteria:

- The Leader,
- Deputy Leader,
- Cabinet Members for Children and Adults
- All Members of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board and Health and Adults Social Care Scrutiny Board
- Members of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and

- Any other Member who may regularly come into contact with children or vulnerable adults as part of their Council role.

Costs

Enhanced DBS checks currently cost £40 each.

Frequency of Check

The Enhanced check will be completed on appointment to the relevant committee and every 12 months from the date of appointment, until the appointment ceases.

What Happens if a Check Reveals an Offence?

In the case of the Enhanced check revealing an offence, then this will in the first instance be referred to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer will in consultation with the Chair of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee consider such things as the severity of the offence and the amount of time that has elapsed since the conviction took place. He/she will then decide whether it should be referred to the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee for consideration. It is recognised that the data will be personal data and confidence will be considered.

Other actions- assurance from Political Parties

It is recognised that a DBS check is only valid on the day that it is provided, and circumstance may change at any time. The Council will work with the Political parties and ask political parties to remind their members that they have an obligation to declare any criminal offences/convictions (other than minor offences such as traffic offences) to the Monitoring Officer as soon as reasonable practicable after conviction. Such declaration would then be considered as outlined above.

Protocol for Independent Persons Appointed under the Localism Act 2011

1. Context

This protocol is intended to be used by Independent Persons who have been appointed under section 28 (7) of the Localism Act 2011, when undertaking their duties.

It will make clear the role of the independent persons and their relationship with the authority and others.

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the Council's "Arrangements" for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011.

2. Role of the Independent Persons

Independent Persons are trusted, experienced and objective consultants who must remain (as the name suggests) independent at all times.

Independent Persons views are to be sought, and taken into account, by the authority before it makes its decision on an allegation against a member or co-opted member, that it has decided to investigate.

The views of the Independent Persons can be sought by the authority and by a member, or co-opted member, of the authority **if that person's behaviour is the subject of an allegation.** An Independent Person's role is not to act as an 'advisor' to the subject member.

When a Member is seeking the views of the Independent Person the Independent Person can provide guidance in relation to the code of conduct and the arrangement they can not advice the Member what the Member should say or how to respond nor can they accompany the Member to meetings. In practice, it will be the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer from the authority who will contact the Independent Persons for their views which will then be incorporated into any relevant decision notices.

The views of the Independent Persons may also be taken into account by the Monitoring Officer at various stages during the informal process.

Independent Persons will consider all the information relating to a complaint, the views of the parties involved in the complaint, the Code of Conduct and the law as it affects standards matters, before offering their view.

3. Methods of Consultation

The Monitoring Officer may contact the Independent Person by telephone, email, in writing or arrange a meeting. Any communication should be formally recorded.

The Independent Person will be provided with sufficient information in order to provide their view and be given sufficient time to consider that information before providing their view. This will change on a case by case basis.

The Independent Person should provide their views in written form, even if the views have already been given verbally.

When providing their view to the Subject Member, the same principles apply.

The Monitoring Officer will advise the Subject Member of their right to contact the Independent Persons and will provide contact details. It should be made clear to the Subject Member by the Independent Person that any communication between them is potentially disclosable to the authority. Communications between the authority and the Independent Persons may also be disclosable to the subject member.

Where a matter is referred to the Standards Committee or its Sub-Committee for determination, the Committee will seek the views of the Independent Persons before reaching its conclusions. Those views will be recorded in any decision notice.

4. Relationship with the Standards Committee

Independent Members will be invited to attend meetings of the Standards Committee, with agreement of the Chair, and will be provided with agendas and minutes of such meetings.

5. Distinct Roles

The Local Authority does not want to fetter the independence of the Independent Person; therefore, we will not allocate specific roles (e.g. one to advise the Council and one to advise the Subject Member). If an Independent Person is consulted by the Subject Member, this would not preclude the Complainant consulting the same Independent Person in the same matter or advising the Standards Sub-Committee or Committee.

6. Other Considerations

Where the Independent Person feels that they cannot provide their views due to a conflict of interest, they should advise the Monitoring Officer of this without delay. The Monitoring Officer will then inform the parties and an alternative Independent Person will be utilised.

The Independent Person may at any time raise any concerns about standards or the implementation of the process with the authority's Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chair of the Standards Committee.

The Independent Persons may be consulted on any proposed changes to the 'arrangements', the Code of Conduct and any other procedures or policies involving the handling of allegations.

The Independent Persons will agree to sign a Code of Conduct, including a register of interests to be held by the Monitoring Officer and will declare any relevant interests in relation to cases to the Monitoring Officer.

The Independent Persons shall not make any comments to the media on any matter without prior the agreement of the Monitoring Officer.

The Independent Persons may be requested by the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee to assist in any training on conduct issues as appropriate.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

1. Introduction

Social media and other electronic communications such as e-mail, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs, enable members to readily engage with citizens, partners and stakeholders. It enables people to get involved in local decision making, encourages better engagement and feedback, and helps the authority to improve the services it provides.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'social media' covers sites and applications including but not restricted to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Zoom, WhatsApp, tiktok, blogs, discussion forums, wikis and any similar sites which may emerge after the creation of this policy.

Electronic communications includes the use of e-mail, private messaging on sites (in a councillor capacity) and forums such as WhatsApp.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the social media guidance for elected members, which is attached at appendix 1.

2. Aims of this policy

The Council acknowledges social media as a useful tool and supports members in the use of social media channels to communicate with the public, partners and stakeholders.

This policy is aimed at ensuring social media is used effectively and to ensure its use does not expose elected members or the Council to security risks, legal or reputational damage or breach of the GDPR (data protection Act 2018).

There are often risks associated with the use of social media, some have been identified below:

- Disclosure of confidential information
- Damage to the reputation of the Council
- Social engineering attacks (often conducted by individuals fraudulently claiming to be a business or client)
- Disclosing commercially sensitive information
- Civil or Criminal action relating to breaches of legislation
- Breach of safeguarding for vulnerable adults or children)
- Unwanted conduct from individuals misusing social media (often referred to as trolls)
- Virus or other malware (malicious software) infection from infected sites

In light of the risks, this policy aims to regulate the use of social media and provide guidance to members on how to successfully engage with social media.

3. Members' responsibilities

In their use of social media, members should ensure:

- They do not breach the Code of Conduct for Members.
- Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media.
- The Council's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected or left open to action under criminal (for example, harassment) or civil law (for example, libel).
- That they are aware of safeguarding issues and report any concerns immediately.
- That members fully understand the risk associated with using social media
- That social media is used in line with this policy

When using social media members should note that in the event of a complaint, the first consideration will be whether the member has been acting in his or her official capacity. Social media should not contain content that holds the member out to be acting in his/her official capacity or give that impression unless this is intended, or the site is specifically meant to be used in an official capacity. Depending on the circumstances such communication might be regarded as conducting the business of the office of a member. Examples may include:

- Communication with individual constituents regarding council matters
- Communications with constituents at large about local issues in your ward or matters of local political interest.
- Making reference to the Council in tweets, blogs, Facebook etc with your council accounts or private accounts where the audience believe you are doing so as a councillor identifying issues discussed by the Council or matters which are within your knowledge due to your position as a councillor.
- Referring to identifiable persons in the Council.
- The link between the Councillor's office and the conduct should have a degree of formality

The above list is not exhaustive and care should be taken in this area.

4. Advice for members using social media

Members should be aware that they are personally responsible for any content they publish on any form of social media.

The Council reserves the right to request the removal of any content that is deemed to be in breach of this policy.

Social media sites are in the public domain and comments/content remains available on the internet as a permanent record unless specifically removed. It is important to ensure that members are confident of the nature of the information they publish. Once published, content is almost impossible to control, it can be shared on other sites, and may be manipulated without their consent, used in different contexts, or further distributed.

Members SHOULD:

- When sharing information with constituents such as through a local Facebook or WhatsApp group ensure that only factual information is shared on the group
- Set up admin rights on local groups and only allow the posting of comments once the admin have reviewed them to ensure that inappropriate/offensive or confidential information is not inadvertently shared on local groups which you manage.
- Make use of privacy settings for personal accounts - particularly if they do not want their social media to be accessed by the press or public. Read the terms of service of any social media site accessed and make sure they understand their confidentiality/privacy settings. Facebook, for example, has a Data Use Policy that includes privacy settings on how information is shared and used.
- State, if appropriate, that their views are their own personal views and may not represent the views of the Council.
- Keep safeguarding in mind. Social media sites are often misused by offenders. Safeguarding is everyone's business – if members have any concerns about other site users, members have a responsibility to report these immediately to the Monitoring Officer, the LADO and or the Police depending upon the circumstances of the matter.
- Observe copyright laws. Using images or text from a copyrighted source (e.g. extracts from publications or photos) without permission is likely to breach copyright. Avoid publishing anything members are unsure about or seek permission from the copyright holder in advance.
- If you load any images of yourself or council pictures on local sites agree these with the press office and have a rider on the **sire** which states "These images are owed by the council (**you as an individual**) and the council ("I") do not agree to the publication/ sharing/ retweeting of these images without **our** consent".

- Report any threats, abuse or harassment via their use of social media to their political group leader, the Monitoring Officer, Members' Services and/or the police. Any incidents should be recorded on an incident log sheet and if harassment is alleged they should be reported on the complaint form at appendix 2.
- If any information is shared with third parties that should not have been shared this may be considered as a data breach and should be reported to the Council's DPO.
- https://intranet.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/11680/data_breach_form

Members should NOT:

- Disclose others' personal details such as home addresses and telephone numbers – even inadvertently. Members should ensure that they handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Council's **Data Protection Policy**.
- Publish or report or share with third parties meetings or information which are private or internal council business (where no members of the public are present or where the information is of a confidential nature) or contain confidential information or matters which are exempt.
- Use the Council's logo on a personal social media account.
- Send or post inappropriate, abusive, bullying, racist or defamatory messages to members of the public, other councillors, any partnering organisations or officers either in or outside the work environment.

5. Principles when using social media

Members should follow the following five guiding principles for any social media activities:

- **Be respectful** – set the tone for online conversations by being polite, open and respectful. Use familiar language, be cordial, honest and professional at all times. Make sure that you respect people’s confidentiality – do not disclose non-public information or the personal information of others.
- **Be credible and consistent** – be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation. Make sure that what you say online is consistent with your other communications.
- **Be honest about who you are** – it is important that any accounts or profiles that you set up are clearly and easily identifiable. Be clear about your own personal role, in particular a clear distinction should be drawn between use of an account in your personal capacity and use in your capacity as a councillor. Note that merely stating you are acting in your private capacity may not be sufficient.
- **Be responsive** – make an effort to share what you know. Offer insights where appropriate and put people in touch with someone who can help if you cannot. Respond to questions and comments in a timely manner.
- **Think twice** – think carefully about all your social media posts. Once published it will be too late to change your mind. Following these rules and seek further guidance if you need it.

6. Further information

If members have any queries about this policy, please contact the Monitoring Officer or, in their absence, the Deputy Monitoring Officer. Incidents should be recorded on an incident log sheet and when formalising a complaint collated into the complaint form at Appendix 2. Upon receipt of a complaint the Monitoring Officer will consider the complaint, provide advice and guidance and update the Member of the potential options available including an investigation where appropriate.

Social Media and Electric Communications Guidance for Councillors

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council welcomes and wishes to encourage Councillors' use of new technology, including social media. It is not a requirement for Councillors to have a Facebook or Twitter account or use other forms of social media. If Councillors are already using or planning to use social media in connection with their work as a councillor, they should ensure that they are familiar with the guidance set out below and that their use of social media does not use Council resources for party political purposes or put the organisation's information and security systems at risk.
- 1.2 Most people are familiar with doing things online and residents will increasingly expect the Council to provide its services online, with the same level of interactivity that they find everywhere else. However, there are challenges that may discourage Councillors and the Council from using social media. For example, inappropriate use (which may occur inadvertently) can cause significant damage to a Councillor's (or the Council's) reputation and can lead to legal claims. In addition, technology is changing fast. This can mean that it is hard to keep up and maintain useful interaction with residents.
- 1.3 There are also some pitfalls to be aware of, and this Guidance is produced to help Councillors avoid these. This Guidance does not tell Councillors what social media is, or which blogs or networks might be used effectively. It assumes that Councillors are aware of those. It deals with the pitfalls that specifically apply to the role of local Councillors.

2. Legal Considerations

- 2.1 Three of the important Nolan Principles applying to those in public life are “Openness”, “Accountability” and “Leadership”. That means Councillors should be as open as possible about the actions and decisions they take, submit to an appropriate level of public scrutiny, and lead by example. Social media can be a vital tool for public debate and its use by Councillors is encouraged.
- 2.2 In the same way as anyone else publishing material, Councillors will need to be aware of the laws that apply to published material. Some of the main ones are these:
- a. **Defamation:** if you publish an untrue statement about a person that is damaging to their reputation you may be liable to pay damages;
 - b. **Copyright:** publishing information that is not yours, without permission, may also result in an award of damages against you;
 - c. **Harassment:** it is an offence to repeatedly pursue a campaign against a person that is likely to cause alarm, harassment or distress;
 - d. **Data protection:** do not publish personal data of other people, including photographs, without their express permission to do so;
 - e. **Incitement:** it is an offence to incite any criminal act;
 - f. **Discrimination and ‘protected characteristics’:** it is an offence to discriminate against anyone based on protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010);
 - g. **Malicious and obscene communications:** it is an offence to send malicious or obscene communications

- 2.3 Likewise, inappropriate and offensive material should not be published. This includes revealing confidential or commercially sensitive information belonging to the Council, personal or confidential information about an individual, publishing something that could reasonably be considered insulting or threatening and something that promotes illegal activity or is intended to deceive.
- 2.4 Additional considerations apply to Councillors.

Bias and pre-determination

- Members sitting on regulatory committees such as planning or licensing should be aware that they are allowed to have a view but must not have gone so far as to have predetermined their position on a matter. Any views aired on social media could be used as evidence of making a decision in advance of hearing all relevant information. The Council's decision is then open to challenge and could be invalidated, and the 'disrepute' provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members could be engaged.

Equality and discrimination

- The Council is a public authority required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. As noted above it is an offence to discriminate against anyone based on their protected characteristics. The Council must also have 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty (which consists of eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations) and that applies to Councillors when appearing to act in their official capacity.

Electioneering

- Council resources, including any the use of social media on Council mobile devices or IT equipment, should not be used for political/campaign purposes. Particular care should also be taken when using social media during the pre- election period. The Electoral Commission has further guidance including on the requirements to provide a return of expenditure on election advertising which includes web advertising.

Human Rights

- Article 8 of the European Convention provides that public authorities should not interfere with the right of individuals to a private and family life without lawful authority to do so, and where it is necessary, proportionate, and in pursuit of one of the aims set out in Article 8(2). (These are national security, public safety, economic well-being, health or morals, prevention of crime or disorder, or protecting others' rights).

Code of Conduct

- Councillors may use social media in both an official and personal capacity but they must be aware that the public may perceive them as acting in either capacity when that is not their intention. Any social media account which could be potentially linked to a councillor would need to meet the standards of the code of conduct.

3. Responsibilities of Councillors

- 3.1 Councillors will need to monitor and, where appropriate, censor or remove the contributions made by others to their sites. Allowing defamatory or offensive statements to remain on a site can become the Councillor's own legal problem as the 'publisher' of the material and could also give rise to Code issues where allowing comments to remain could be seen as condoning or endorsing them.
- 3.2 Similarly, 'liking', 'sharing' or 're-tweeting' posts could be seen as an endorsement of them and legally this can be a separate instance of publication, by the Councillor, to which all the legal and Code considerations would apply.
- 3.3 Beyond that it is generally best to allow disagreement rather than to seek to censor it. However, there is no need to respond to everything and unhelpful online arguments should be avoided. Be professional, respectful and polite, even (or especially) when corresponding with those who do not return the courtesy.
- 3.4 Careful use of language is required. Sarcasm, irony and ambiguous comments should be avoided.

- 3.5 Promptly admit to mistakes.
- 3.6 Avoid using social media when you are tired, angry, upset or your judgment may be impaired as something permanently published can't be easily taken back
- 3.7 Think carefully about who to 'follow' or 'befriend' online. Online 'friendships' with council officers should be avoided as they may compromise the appearance of impartial advice. It is inadvisable to 'follow' anyone without a good reason – some constituents may find it uncomfortable (and see the Human Rights comments above). Many Councillors wait to be 'followed' before returning the compliment.
- 3.8 Always ensure the security of your devices to prevent unauthorised access by third parties who may make inappropriate use of the device.

4. Principles for using Social Media

You should follow these five guiding principles for any social media activities:

- **Be respectful** – set the tone for online conversations by being polite, open and respectful. Use familiar language, be cordial, honest and professional at all times. Make sure that you respect people's confidentiality – do not disclose non-public information or the personal information of others.
- **Be credible and consistent** – be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation. Make sure that what you say online is consistent with your other communications.
- **Be honest about who you are** – it is important that any accounts or profiles that you set up are clearly and easily identifiable. Be clear about your own personal role, in particular a clear distinction should be drawn between use of an account in your personal capacity and use in your capacity as a councillor. Note that merely stating you are acting in your private capacity may not be sufficient.

- **Be responsive** – make an effort to share what you know. Offer insights where appropriate and put people in touch with someone who can help if you cannot. Respond to questions and comments in a timely manner.
- **Think twice** – think carefully about all your social media posts. Once published it will be too late to change your mind. Following these rules and seek further guidance if you need it.

5. Use of Social Media during Committee Meetings

- 5.1 Use mobile devices sparingly, discreetly and with common sense at meetings, considering the impression they are giving to others. Councillors should be mindful that regulatory committees such as planning or licensing require the Councillor to alert officers to any lobbying material they have received. This would be difficult if it arrives on Twitter and is read by the Councillor during the course of a meeting.
- 5.2 Mobile devices enable councillors to manage their busy lives when time is at a premium. There may be occasions when texting or e-mailing between Councillors during meetings on matters relevant to the debate at hand may be valuable (on the same basis as circulating paper notes) However it is important for Councillors not to give the impression that insufficient attention is being given to the discussion at the meeting. That could lead to the relevant decision coming under challenge if Councillors are perceived to have made a decision without having properly listened to the debate. It could also result in Code complaints of a failure to treat others with respect or of bringing the Council into disrepute.

6. Inappropriate use of Social Media by Others

- 6.1 Anyone receiving threats, abuse or harassment via their use of social media should report it to the police and the Monitoring Officer. Member are asked to complete and incident log sheet for each incident and then to collate all of these into the complaint form at appendix 2.

- 6.2 Other inappropriate content can be reported to the social media site directly to ask for it to be removed. You may wish to save a screenshot in the circumstances.

7. Further Reading Materials

- 7.1 Connected Councillors – A guide to using social media to support local leadership. Local Government Association.
https://hedonblog.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/connected_councillors.pdf
- 7.2 The Local Government Association’s webpage on social media
<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/comms-hub-communications-support/digital-communications/social-1>

8. Complaints

- 8.1 These guidelines do not form part of the Code of Conduct for Members but there may be instances where councillors’ use of social media amounts to a breach of the Member’s Code of Conduct and the Monitoring Officer may take these guidelines into account when considering whether such a breach has taken place.

9. Contact details

For further information please contact:

Surjit Tour, Monitoring Officer on 0121 569 3172

Email: Surjit_Tour@Sandwell.gov.uk

Maria Price, Deputy Monitoring Officer and DPO on 0121 569 3175.

Email: Maria_Price@Sandwell.gov.uk

Social Media Incident Report Form

Reporting incidents of abusive/harassing behaviour
You should report and incidents of harassing behaviour
directly to the police.

Unfortunately, there are rare circumstances where individuals abuse social media. We recognise that this can have an unpleasant and profound effect on you and your emotional wellbeing. The Council can support and assist you and in certain circumstances can take action on your behalf to manage such behaviours. In order to assist you we require you to provide some information.

Please refer to the Social media and policy guidance for members. This form should not be used to report incidents/allegations of breach of the social media policy by other elected members. In such circumstances the members code of conduct/arrangements should be referred to.

Your details

1. Please provide us with your name and contact details.

Title:	
First name:	
Last name:	
Address:	
Contact telephone:	
Email address:	
Signature:	
Date of complaint:	

Your address and contact details will not usually be released unless necessary or to deal with your complaint.

The following people will see this Form:

- The Monitoring Officer of the authority and appropriate officers supporting the Monitoring Officer.

2. Please provide us with the name of the Individuals(s) you believe have harassed/abused you on social media:

Title	First name	Last name

3. Please explain in this section (or on separate sheets) exactly what has occurred, when it occurred, why you feel it is harassing and or abusive and what action you have taken to ask the individual(s) to stop the behaviour. In order to progress this matter you will need to provide screen shots of all of the messages/tweets/ re-tweets and or blogs. You should also supply dates, documentary evidence and details of any witnesses that you believe would substantiate the allegations.

Please include the following,

- If you asked for the conduct to stop and when
- Details of any reports you have made to the Police about this allegation and when
- All correspondence that you have had with this individual (s)
- Details of if you reported to the incident to a host site, when and what action was taken such as taking posts down.
- You should be specific, wherever possible, about exactly what you are alleging and what it was they said or did to insult you.
- You should provide the dates of the alleged incidents wherever possible. If you cannot provide exact dates it is important to give a general timeframe.
- Details of any incidents that have occurred of a harassing/abusive nature in addition to those on social media
- You should confirm whether there are any witnesses to the alleged conduct and provide their names and contact details if possible.
- You should provide any relevant background information or other relevant documentary evidence to support your allegation(s).

- If your allegation(s) relate to behaviour or conduct that occurred some time ago clearly explain why your complaint was not made earlier.

Please provide us with the details of your complaint.

Please provide the relevant screen captures at the back of this form

Only complete this next section if you are requesting that your identity is kept confidential

4. Please indicate the remedy or remedies you are looking for or hoping to achieve. i.e. taking offensive posts down, apology, other action

5. Please indicate whether you have raised your complaint directly with the individual(s) concerned and if so what response you received.

(Continue on separate sheet(s), as necessary)

Additional Information

6. Your concerns need to be submitted in writing along with supporting evidence in order of the Monitoring Office to properly consider the options available to you and the council. Please use this Form to submit your complaint.
7. In line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2000, we can make reasonable adjustments to assist you if you have a disability that prevents you raising your concerns. We can also help if English is not your first language.
8. If you need any support in completing this form, please contact the Monitoring Officer as soon as possible.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO:

Surjit Tour

Director of Law and Governance
& Monitoring Officer

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Law and Governance
Sandwell Council House
PO Box 2374
Oldbury
West Midlands
B69 3DE

T: 0121 569 3264

E: surjit_tour@sandwell.gov.uk

W: www.sandwell.gov.uk

Report to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

21 June 2022

Subject:	Appointment to Ethical Standards Sub-Committees and Ethical Standards Working Group
Director:	Surjit Tour - Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Surjit Tour

1 Recommendations

That the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee:

- 2.1 Appoints to two Ethical Standards Sub-Committees for the 2022/23 municipal year, with flexibility between membership to cater for availability and workload, with delegated powers to carry out the functions set out in the following terms of reference, and with the membership set out below:

Terms of reference of the Ethical Standards Sub Committee

- To consider investigation reports referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.
- To conduct hearings (including the imposition of sanctions).

Membership

SUB-COMMITTEE 1		SUB-COMMITTEE 2	
Member	Substitute	Member	Substitute
Allcock	Substitute members taken from remainder of committee	Allcock	Substitute members taken from remainder of committee
Crompton		G Gill	
Lewis		E M Giles	
Jalil		Rahman	
W Gill (or sub)		W Gill (or sub)	
+ Independent Person		+ Independent Person	

- 2.2 Approves the Terms of Reference for the Ethical Standards Working Group and appoints members (Chair and Vice Chair + 3 members).

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires authorities to adopt arrangements for dealing with complaints about breaches of the Member Code of Conduct. The Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints provide for a Sub-Committee of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee to consider investigation reports referred to it by the Monitoring Officer and to conduct hearings (including the imposition of sanctions).

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

 	<p>High standards of conduct are an essential part of good corporate governance and this in turn has a direct relationship with the delivery of high quality services.</p>
 	
 	

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Council at its annual meeting held on 24 May 2022 agreed the membership of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. The Committee now needs to make appointments to the Ethical Standards Sub Committees and Working Group.
- 4.2 The Committee is requested to appoint to the Working Group, consisting of the Chair and Vice Chair plus three other members of the Committee (+ the two independent persons). The Terms of Reference for the group is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The working group is not a decision-making body but will enable matters and issues to be discussed and explored, and reports being prepared for the consideration of the Committee in due course.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Committee is required to appoint members to the sub-committees to ensure relevant standards complaints are effectively addressed.
- 5.2 The Committee is not required to have a working group, however it is considered good practice to periodically review matters such as the Code of Conduct and Arrangements for dealing with complaints and a working group provides a helpful way to undertake such a review. A working group also enables broader discussion and debate to take place on how the Council can promote and maintain higher standards of conduct.

6 Implications

Resources:	There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.
Legal and Governance:	Section 28(6) of the Localism Act 2011 provides that a relevant authority must have in place arrangements under which allegations that a member or co-opted member of the authority has failed to comply with the authority's code of conduct can be investigated, and arrangements under which decisions on allegations can be made. There is no statutory requirement as to the nature of these arrangements.
Risk:	There are no direct risk implications arising from this report.
Equality:	There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.
Social Value	There are no direct social value implications arising from this report.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference – Ethical Standards Working Group

8. Background Papers

None.

ETHICAL STANDARDS WORKING GROUP

Terms of Reference

Scope

To review the Council's Ethical Framework, namely:

- Council's Members' Code of Conduct;
- Arrangements for Members' Register and declarations of Interest; and
- Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011.
- DBS Checks for Members
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Social Media matters affecting members
- Member Development Programme
- Review of Recruitment of Independent Persons

To gather insight, consult and/or gather such data and information from sources as deemed necessary and appropriate to undertake an effective review of the Ethical Framework.

To consider and make recommendations on how the council can discharge its duty to promote high standards of conduct as required under the Localism Act 2011.

To consider and assist the Chairperson of the Committee to formally respond to the Local Authority Ethical Standards: Stakeholder Consultation.

To support the development, implementation and delivery of a revised Elected Member Development Programme.

To support the accreditation process in relation to the West Midlands Member Development Charter.

Membership

Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Standards and Member Development Committee plus three other Members of the Standards and Member Development Committee.

Independent Members shall be entitled to attend meetings of the Working Group in an advisory capacity.

The Working Group may invite other members or third parties to working Group meetings as it considers appropriate and necessary to undertake the review.

Quorate and Meetings

At least three Members of the Working Group.

Meetings shall be held as required.

Chairperson of the Working Group

The Chairperson of the Working Group shall be the Chairperson of the Committee or in his absence the Committee's Deputy Chairperson.

Decision-making

To submit recommendations to the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee on revisions to the Council's Ethical Framework.

Voting

By majority vote with the Chairperson (or Deputy as applicable) having a casting vote.

Access to Information Rules

The Working Group is not a constitutional meeting of the council or a sub-committee of the Standards and Member Development Committee and as such is not subject to the Access to Information Rules.

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Report to Ethical Standards

21 June 2022

Subject:	Government Response to Committee on Standards in Public Life's Ethical Standards Review
Director:	Surjit Tour - Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Vanessa Maher-Smith Principal Lead for Governance and Business Support & Solicitor

1 Recommendations

1.1 Members note the response of the Government to the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in their Ethical Standards Review.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 Members need to be aware of the Government's position in relation to the review report by the CSPL as it may have implications for the Council.

2.2 The Council will need to take forward any action points following the response.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		The Government response to the review on ethical standards by the CSPL is important as it gives direction to the way in which the Council deals with its ethical framework to ensure high standards in public life. Improving standards of councillors will benefit all residents of Sandwell and will indirectly impact on the delivery of the Council's priorities.
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In January 2019 the Committee on Standards in Public Life (“CSPL”) published its review report into ethical standards. In the report the CSPL made 26 recommendations (24 of which were directed at Government), which included various amendments to legislation as well as a number of examples of best practice that Local Authorities could implement without the legislative changes.
- 4.2 Since that time, the Local Government Association has implemented the first recommendation which is the adoption of a model code of conduct. This was published in 2020 and the Council adopted it in March 2021.
- 4.3 On Friday 18 March 2022, in a letter from Kemi Badenoch MP, Minister for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities, the government issued its response to the CSPL report.
- 4.4 The key points for the Council are:

Recommendation 2 – that Government should ensure that candidates standing for or accepting public offices are not required publicly to disclose their home address.

The Government agrees with the principle behind the recommendation (to safeguard elected members) and intends to “*engage with interested parties on the best means to ensure that candidates and councillors are not required publicly to disclose their home address*”.



Recommendation 3 – Councillors should be presumed to be acting in an official capacity in their public life, including statements on publicly accessible social media.

The Government response is that this should be dealt with in each Local Authorities code of conduct.

The Government notes that “it is important to recognise that there is a boundary between an elected representative’s public life and their private or personal life. Automatically presuming (irrespective of the context and circumstances) that any comment is in an official capacity risks conflating the two.

Recommendation 8 – the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to required that Independent Persons are appointed for a fixed term of two years, renewable once.

The Government did not accept this recommendation, recognising that there is a small pool of people capable and willing to undertake the role, and that local authorities are likely to wish to retain effective Independent Persons.

Recommendation 11 – Local Authorities should provide legal indemnity to Independent Persons if their views or advice are disclosed.

The Government agrees in principle and endorses this as best practice rather than through amending legislation.

Recommendation 16 – Local Authorities should be given the power to suspend councillors without allowances for up to 6 months (and other related recommendations regarding sanctions)

The Government has no plans to legislate for additional sanctions. The Government states “local authorities are not without sanctions under the current regime...if the elected member is a member of a political group, they would also expect to be subject to party discipline...All councillors are ultimately held to account via the ballot box”.



Recommendation 18 – the criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished.

The Government does not agree, but believes the criminal offences is a necessary and proportionate safeguard and deterrent against corruption.

Recommendation 22 - The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 should be amended to provide that disciplinary protections for statutory officers extend to all disciplinary action, not just dismissal.

The Government agrees in principle that the disciplinary protections for the three statutory officers (Monitoring Officer, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and the Chief Finance Officer (s151)) should be extended to all disciplinary actions.

It has agreed to “*engage with sector representative bodies of all tiers of local government to seek views on amending the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England)(Amendment) Regulations to provide disciplinary protections for statutory officers.*”

Recommendation 23 - The Local Government Transparency Code should be updated to provide that local authorities must ensure that their whistleblowing policy specifies a named contact for the external auditor alongside their contact details, which should be available on the authority’s website.

The Government agrees with this and recommends this as best practice.

Recommendation 24 - Councillors should be listed as ‘prescribed persons’ for the purposes of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Prescribed persons are individuals or organisations that a worker may approach outside their workplace to report suspected or known wrongdoing and still be protected by the rights afforded to them under whistleblowing legislation.



Councillors would not meet the criteria for a Prescribed Person.
“However, the Government recognises that this may provide a further check and balance against council corruption or wrongdoing and is open to further representations on the matter on how local accountability can be strengthened in this regard.”

5 Implications

Resources:	N/A
Legal and Governance:	There are likely to be changes going forward to the governance arrangements.
Risk:	N/A
Equality:	N/A
Health and Wellbeing:	N/A
Social Value	N/A

6 Appendices

- 6.1 Local government ethical standards: government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life report

7. Background Papers

N/A



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Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Kemi Badenoch MP

*Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up
Communities*

**Department for Levelling up, Housing and
Communities**

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2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Lord Evans of Weardale, KCB, DL
Chair Committee on Standards in Public Life
Room G07
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Email: kemi.badenoch@levellingup.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dluhc

Dear Lord Evans,

On behalf of the Government, I would like to thank the Committee on Standards in Public Life for its report and the recommendations arising from its review of Local Government Ethical Standards, and to all those who engaged with the Committee's work. Attached is the Government response to the Committee's individual recommendations that were directed at Government.

Vibrant local democracies flourish where the reputation of the local authority is held in high regard, where councillors' decision-making is transparent, valued and trusted by the communities they serve, and where people are willing and confident to put themselves forward as potential candidates. The standards and conduct framework within which local authorities operate must drive out corruption and promote commitment to the principles on standards in public life, and tolerance to the differing views of others. In responding to the review, the Government has taken into account the importance of protecting free speech and freedom of association within the law.

The Government is committed to working with local authorities and their representative organisations to ensure that local government is supported in reinforcing its reputation for ethical local standards.

The fact that this review had been conducted in such a collaborative way with the sector has been apparent from the outset and is borne out in the final report. I am keen that Government builds on the sector-wide enthusiasm for improvement.

The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that there have been benefits from local authorities being responsible for ethical standards, including the flexibility and

discretion to resolve standards issues informally. However, we also recognise the role of Government in ensuring that the system is robust.

The number of requests for legislation in the Committee's recommendations to strengthen the standards and conduct framework and its safeguards is considerable. As indicated in this response, the Government believes that some of these suggestions do not need a legislative response but can be more appropriately, effectively, and swiftly taken forward by local authorities as best practice. The Committee will recognise that the Government and Parliament has taken a different view on these matters when it legislated for the Localism Act 2011.

I thank the Committee for their work on the review and for their patience whilst Government carefully considered their recommendations, and I personally look forward to continuing to work with you as Government progresses the commitments made in this response with the sector.

Yours sincerely,

KEMI BADENOCH MP

**Minister of State for Equalities
and Levelling Up Communities**

Government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life review of local government ethical standards

This Government response confines itself to the Committee's recommendations directed at Government, other than with regards to the first recommendation. The response to recommendations 10, 12, 13, 14 and 16 have been grouped together and therefore appear out of numerical order below.

Recommendation 1

The Local Government Association should create an updated model code of conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government.

The Localism Act 2011 states that relevant authorities must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. It requires these authorities to adopt a code of conduct for their councillors.¹ Authorities can determine the content of their own code of conduct. However, codes must conform to the seven 'Nolan' principles of standards in public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. Relevant authorities for the purposes of these requirements include local authorities in England, namely county councils, district councils, London borough councils and parish and town councils.

It is for individual councils to set their own local code, in line with the Act. The Government has previously published a light-touch illustrative code of conduct.

The Local Government Association has worked with sector representative bodies to update its own suggested code of conduct, with the intention that this new suggested code could establish a consistent benchmark that local authorities can amend or add to as they see fit to reflect local circumstances and priorities. The Local Government Association published the updated code of conduct in January 2021. However, it remains a local decision on whether this model code is adopted.

Recommendation 2

The government should ensure that candidates standing for or accepting public offices are not required publicly to disclose their home address. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 should be amended to clarify that a councillor does not need to register their home address on an authority's register of interests.

¹ References to councillors in this document also should be deemed to include elected mayors.

This issue was brought up in the Committee's work on intimidation in public life, and the Government has already taken forward several steps in this regard. The Government is open and receptive to further steps to help prevent intimidation.

The Government agrees with the principle behind this recommendation – which safeguards elected representatives - and considers amending the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 would be an option to achieve it.

The Government will engage with interested parties on the best means to ensure that candidates and councillors are not required publicly to disclose their home address.

Notwithstanding, it is important that home addresses are internally registered with monitoring officers, to help avoid conflicts of interest.

Recommendation 3

Councillors should be presumed to be acting in an official capacity in their public conduct, including statements on publicly accessible social media. Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to permit local authorities to presume so when deciding upon code of conduct breaches.

The Government's view is that it is for individual local authorities to consider if their code of conduct is adequate in addressing the issue of inappropriate use of social media.

As the Government outlined to Parliament in March 2021 on tackling intimidation in public life: 'It is important to distinguish between strongly felt political debate on the one hand, and unacceptable acts of abuse, intimidation and violence on the other. British democracy has always been robust and oppositional. Free speech within the law can sometimes involve the expression of political views that some may find offensive': a point that the Government has recognised in a Department for Education policy paper². But a line is crossed when disagreement mutates into intimidation, which refuses to tolerate other opinions and seeks to deprive others from exercising their free speech and freedom of association.'

It is important to recognise that there is a boundary between an elected representative's public life and their private or personal life. Automatically presuming (irrespective of the context and circumstances) that any comment is in an official capacity risks conflating the two.

² Higher education: free speech and academic freedom Feb 2021
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-free-speech-and-academic-freedom>

Recommendation 4

Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to state that a local authority’s code of conduct applies to a member when they claim to act, or give the impression they are acting, in their capacity as a member or as a representative of the local authority.

The Government agrees that local authority elected representatives should act in good faith in the public interest and not seek to influence decisions for personal gain, for malicious intent or to further the interests of any business or any other organisations which they may be affiliated with.

The Local Government Association have updated their [own suggested code of conduct](#) to state that the code applies when “[a member’s] actions could give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that [they] are acting as a [member]”.

It is for individual local authorities to ensure that their codes of conducts are regularly updated, comprehensive and fit for purpose. Elected members receive the necessary training to make them aware of their personal responsibilities in upholding the code.

The Government will keep this matter under review but has no immediate plans to amend the regulations.

Recommendation 5

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 should be amended to include: unpaid directorships; trusteeships; management roles in a charity or a body of a public nature; and membership of any organisations that seek to influence opinion or public policy.

The electorate must have confidence that the decisions of their elected representatives are being made in the best interests of the community they have been elected to serve. Unpaid roles may need to be declared if it is relevant to council business, and councillors should recuse themselves if necessary if discussions relate to private bodies, they are involved in.

The Government is mindful that councillors have a right to a private life, and rights of freedom of association outside their role as a councillor. It is frequently the case that people in public life have a complex pattern of interests and play a variety of roles with different types of organisations, including community interest groups and charities.

The Government will keep this matter under review but has no immediate plans to amend the regulations.

Recommendation 6

Local authorities should be required to establish a register of gifts and hospitality, with councillors required to record gifts and hospitality received over a value of £50 or totalling £100 over a year from a single source. This requirement should be included in an updated model code of conduct.

The Local Government Association's suggested code of conduct published in January 2021 includes a requirement for members to "register... any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50". However, it did not contain any requirements relating to the total value of gifts or hospitality received from the same source over a sustained period.

Local authorities have the autonomy to set gifts and hospitality requirements in their own codes of conduct. The Government accepts that there is merit in best practice guidance on the thresholds for gifts and hospitality and agrees that a register of gifts and hospitality should be publicly available.

Recommendation 7

Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 should be repealed, and replaced with a requirement that councils include in their code of conduct that a councillor must not participate in a discussion or vote in a matter to be considered at a meeting if they have any interest, whether registered or not, "if a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard the interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your consideration or decision-making in relation to the matter".

Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 requires that a councillor must not participate in a discussion or vote on a matter where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. Section 30(3) of the Localism Act 2011 further provides that any relevant pecuniary interests of a councillor's spouse or partner are considered as a disclosable pecuniary interest of the councillor.

The Committee's report reflects concerns that the disclosable pecuniary interest arrangements infringe on the privacy of a councillor's spouse or partner. Where there would be a potential conflict of interest, the principle of integrity requires that any such interests should nevertheless be declared and resolved.

The Government will keep this matter under review but has no immediate plans to repeal Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011.

Recommendation 8

The Localism Act 2011 should be amended to require that Independent Persons are appointed for a fixed term of two years, renewable once.

The Government does not accept this recommendation as appropriate for legislation on the basis that it would be likely to be unworkable. The Government's view is that it would be more appropriately implemented as a best practice recommendation for local authorities.

In principle, it may be attractive to limit the terms Independent Persons serve to keep their role and contribution "fresh" and avoid them becoming too closely affiliated with the overriding organisational culture. However, discussions with Monitoring Officers indicate that in practice most local authorities would likely find servicing this rate of turnover unachievable. There is frequently a small pool of people capable and willing to undertake the role, who also fit the stringent specifications of being amongst the electorate, having no political affiliation, no current or previous association with the council, and no friends or family members associated with the council.

When local authorities have found effective Independent Persons who demonstrate the capability, judgement and integrity required for this quite demanding yet unpaid role, it is understandable that they may be reluctant to place limitations on the appointment.

Recommendation 9

The Local Government Transparency Code should be updated to provide that the view of the Independent Person in relation to a decision on which they are consulted should be formally recorded in any decision notice or minutes.

The Government does not agree with this. The Local Government Transparency Code is a statutory requirement to publish information; it does not regulate the content of councils' minutes or decision notices.

The substantive policy suggestion has merit but will depend on circumstances. In cases where there is no case to answer from an unfounded complaint, it should not necessarily be a legal requirement to publish details of that unfounded complaint.

Recommendation 10

A local authority should only be able to suspend a councillor where the authority's Independent Person agrees both with the finding or a breach and that suspending the councillor would be a proportionate sanction.

Recommendation 12

Local authorities should be given the discretionary power to establish a decision-making standards committee with voting independent members and voting members from dependent parishes, to decide on allegations and impose sanctions.

Recommendation 13

Councillors should be given the right to appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman if their local authority imposes a period of suspension for breaching the code of conduct.

Recommendation 14

The Local Government Ombudsman should be given the power to investigate and decide upon an allegation of a code of conduct breach by a councillor, and the appropriate sanction, an appeal by a councillor who has had a suspension imposed. The Ombudsman's decision should be binding on the local authority.

Recommendation 16

Local authorities should be given the power to suspend councillors, without allowances, for up to six months.

There is no provision in current legislation for a sanction to suspend a councillor found to have breached the code of conduct, and this was a deliberate policy decision by the Coalition Government at the time of the Localism Act 2011 to differentiate from the previous, failed Standards Board regime. The Standards Board regime allowed politically motivated and vexatious complaints and had a chilling effect on free speech within local government. These proposals would effectively reinstate that flawed regime.

It would be undesirable to have a government quango to police the free speech of councillors; it would be equally undesirable to have a council body (appointed by councillors, and/or made up of councillors) sitting in judgment on the political comments of fellow councillors.

On the rare occasions where notable breaches of the code of conduct have occurred, local authorities are not without sanctions under the current regime. Councillors can be barred from Cabinet, Committees, or representative roles, and may be publicly criticised. If the elected member is a member of a political group, they would also expect to be subject to party discipline, including being removed from that group or their party. Political parties are unlikely to reselect councillors who have brought their group or party into disrepute. All councillors are ultimately held to account via the ballot box.

As part of the Government's response to the Committee's report on intimidation in public life, the Government recommended that every political party establish their own code of conduct for party members, including elected representatives.

The Government will engage with sector representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government to seek views on options to strengthen sanctions to address breaches of the code which fall below the bar of criminal activity and related sanctions but involve serious incidents of bullying and harassment or disruptive behaviour.

Recommendation 11

Local authorities should provide legal indemnity to Independent Persons if their views or advice are disclosed. The government should require this through secondary legislation if needed.

The Government agrees in principle.

Initial soundings with the sector indicate that some local authorities already provide legal indemnity for Independent Persons.

The Government endorses providing legal indemnity for Independent Person as local authority best practice but does not currently see the need to require this through secondary legislation.

Recommendation 15

The Local Government Transparency Code should be updated to require councils to publish annually: the number of code of conduct complaints they receive; what the complaints broadly relate to (e.g., bullying; conflict of interest); the outcome of those complaints, including if they are rejected as trivial or vexatious; and any sanctions applied.

The Government believes that this is better addressed through the sector adopting as best practice a regular pattern of annual reporting by Standard Committees of the cases and complaints handled and would encourage this as best practice by the sector.

The Government does not believe that there is a requirement to prescribe to local authorities the form and content of such Standard Committee annual reports.

Recommendation 17

The government should clarify if councils may lawfully bar councillors from council premises or withdraw facilities as sanctions. These powers should be put beyond doubt in legislation if necessary.

The criminal law, overseen by the police and courts, provides for more appropriate and effective action against breaches of public order, for anti-social behaviour, and against harassment.

The occasion where councils would seek to bar councillors from council premises are thought to be extremely rare. We will consider this further.

Recommendation 18

The criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished.

It is a criminal offence to fail to declare pecuniary interests, which acts as a strong deterrent against corruption.

The Government does not agree with this recommendation, but rather believes the criminal offence of a non-disclosure of pecuniary interest to be a necessary and proportionate safeguard and deterrent against corruption.

The high bar of police involvement has served to discourage politically motivated and unfounded complaints.

Recommendation 20

Section 27(3) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to state that parish councils must adopt the code of conduct of their principal authority, with the necessary amendments, or the new model code.

The Government does not agree that this is necessary and has no plans to repeal Section 27(3) of the Localism Act 2011.

The Government considers that the adoption of the principal authority's code or the new model code is a matter for local determination.

There are merits in achieving consistency within principal authority areas to eliminate potential confusion amongst constituents and elected members but there may be instances where a parish council may want to add to the code of their principal authority to reflect local circumstances.

Recommendation 21

Section 28 (11) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to state that any sanction imposed on a parish councillor following the finding of a breach is to be determined by the relevant principal authority.

The Government has no current plans to repeal Section 28 (11) of the Localism Act 2011 but will give this matter further consideration.

Recommendation 22

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 should be amended to provide that disciplinary protections for statutory officers extend to all disciplinary action, not just dismissal.

The three statutory officers in local government are the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and the Chief Finance Officer (often referred to as the Section 151 Officer).

Under the current disciplinary arrangements for statutory officers, any decision to dismiss a statutory officer must be taken by full council, following a hearing by a panel that must include at least two Independent Persons. The Committee consider that the disciplinary protections for statutory officers should be enhanced, by extending disciplinary protections to all disciplinary actions (such as suspension or formal warnings), not just dismissal.

The Government agrees in principle with this recommendation and recognises this will be pertinent to Monitoring Officers who may not necessarily be afforded the same seniority in the organisational hierarchy of a local authority as the two other statutory officers (Head of Paid Service and the Section 151 Officer), and who may be subject to personal pressures when conducting high profile breach of conduct investigations.

The Government will engage with sector representative bodies of all tiers of local government to seek views on amending the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England)(Amendment) Regulations to provide disciplinary protections for statutory officers.

Recommendation 23

The Local Government Transparency Code should be updated to provide that local authorities must ensure that their whistleblowing policy specifies a named contact for the external auditor alongside their contact details, which should be available on the authority's website.

The Government agrees with the principle that openness is essential.

Most local authorities already publish their whistleblowing policy, procedures and a named contact on their websites, and Government is recommending that this is adopted as a best practice recommendation.

The Government published the UK National Action Plan for Open Government 2021 – 2023 in January 2022. This includes a commitment on local transparency.³ The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will work with the local government community to develop a set of specific actions to advance transparency in the sector. DLUHC will support local government to solidify their transparency policies and processes and encourage proactive publication of open data across councils.

Recommendation 24

Councillors should be listed as ‘prescribed persons’ for the purposes of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Prescribed persons are individuals or organisations that a worker may approach outside their workplace to report suspected or known wrongdoing and still be protected by the rights afforded to them under whistleblowing legislation. They are prescribed by an order made by the Secretary of State (for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) for this purpose. A complete list of prescribed persons is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2>.

Local councillors would not meet the criteria of being external to an individual’s workplace in relation to matters affecting the council and could therefore not be considered as a ‘prescribed person’ for the purposes of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Disclosures relating to local authorities can be made to the external auditor of the relevant authority, the Comptroller and Auditor General (National Audit Office), or a Member of Parliament.

However, the Government recognises that this may provide a further check and balance against council corruption or wrongdoing and is open to further representations on the matter on how local accountability can be strengthened in this regard.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-for-open-government-2021-2023/uk-national-action-plan-for-open-government-2021-2023#local-transparency>

Report to Ethical Standards

21 June 2022

Subject:	Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022
Director:	Surjit Tour - Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Vanessa Maher-Smith Principal Lead for Governance and Business Support & Solicitor

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members note that the Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022 (“the Act”) comes into force on 28th June 2022.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 On 28th April 2022, the Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022 received Royal Assent. It comes into force 2 months after the date it has passed, being 28th June 2022.
- 2.2 The Act amends the current legislation to extend the disqualification criteria for Local Authority members (Councillors, Mayors of Combined Authorities, the Mayor of London and London Assembly Members).
- 2.3 Its provisions include disqualifying a person, depending on the status of the relevant order or notification, from being elected or being a member of a local authority or the mayor for the area of a combined authority in England, if they are subject to the notification requirements of Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or a sexual harm prevention order, sexual risk order or related relevant orders.



- 2.4 In relation to criminal activity (not related to election practices) the current disqualification criteria for Councillors, directly elected Mayors and London Assembly Members is that they are disqualified from standing for election or holding public office if they have been convicted of any offence and have received a sentence of imprisonment (suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine.
- 2.5 As a result of new offences and new sentencing guidelines, some sexual offences do not result in a custodial sentence. Therefore, councillors convicted of offences, which previously would have resulted in disqualification, are now able to retain their role if elected or run for election even if recently convicted.
- 2.6 The Act now ensures that those who have unintentionally fallen out of scope are now included.
- 2.7 The Act ensures that those who hold public office are held to the highest standards of integrity and conduct in public life and supports the Nolan Principles.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		The Act ensures that those who hold public office are held to the highest standards of integrity and conduct in public life.
		
		It should give confidence to Sandwell residents that those who represent them are accountable for their own conduct.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 It is relevant for all Members to be aware of the new legislation.



5 Implications

Resources:	There are no resource implications arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	This is a legislative update. Associated policies and guidance will need to be reviewed to include this provision.
Risk:	There are no risk implications arising from this report.
Equality:	There are no equality implications arising from this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.
Social Value	This ensures that Sandwell Councillors are held accountable for their conduct.

6 Appendices

None

7. Background Papers

N/A



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Report to the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

21 June 2022

Subject:	Gifts and Hospitality Register
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer – Surjit Tour
Contact Officer:	Trisha Newton Trisha_Newton@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee considers the Gifts and Hospitality Register and declaration of interests made by Members.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Following the Best Practice recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Gifts and Hospitality Register is a standing agenda item for meetings of this Committee.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		Maintenance of the Members' Register of Interests contributes to public confidence in local democracy and is an essential part of good corporate governance.
		
		The Members' Register of Gifts and Hospitality is an important instrument of openness and good governance. It provides an accessible record of the gifts and hospitality received by members. Monitoring and review of the Register will help to contribute to better corporate governance which underpins the delivery of high quality services.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Guidance is available to all members on how to treat offers of gifts and hospitality and the process for declaring such offers. This guidance forms part of the Council's Constitution.
- 4.2 The Monitoring Officer maintains a public register of members' interests and also a record of any gift or hospitality received with an estimated value of at least £50.00. The Register of Members' Gifts and Hospitality is available for inspection by the public at all reasonable hours. Declarations of gifts and hospitality by individual members are also recorded on the Council's committee management system, sandwell.moderngov.co.uk, on the Council's web site and can be accessed at any time from the internet.
- 4.3 The Registers are periodically reviewed by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer.
- 4.4 At the point of publishing the agenda, there has been no new entry to the Gifts and Hospitality Register since the last meeting of the Committee.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The purpose of the report is for the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee to consider the Gifts and Hospitality Register and the declarations of interests made by Members. As such, there are no alternative options.

6 Implications

Resources:	There are no strategic resource implications arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	<p>The Authority has a statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members. The Authority is also obliged to have in place a Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The new standards arrangements are set out in chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011, and in secondary legislation made under the Act, particularly in The Relevant Authorities (Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.</p> <p>The Localism Act 2011 strengthens requirements on members to register and disclose interests.</p> <p>The Localism Act 2011 (and Regulations made under the Act) did not include any provisions requiring Members' or co-opted Members' to register Gifts and Hospitality, which was formerly the case. However, the Council does still have a duty to promote high standards of conduct by Members' and co-opted Members'.</p> <p>The Members' Code of Conduct describes the interests of any person from whom a member has received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50.00 as other registerable interest of the member.</p> <p>The Protocol for Members' on Gifts and Hospitality sets out important guidance for Members' on the acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality.</p>

	Maintaining a Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality also assists the Council to comply with the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010. Under the Bribery Act 2010 all employees and Elected Members' are prohibited from soliciting, arranging or accepting bribes intended for the benefit of the Council, or for their personal benefit, or for the benefit of the employee's family, associates or acquaintances.
Risk:	The Committee considers the Gifts and Hospitality register and members' declarations of interests to protect Members from the acceptance of any unlawful or inappropriate gifts, which would affect the reputation of the Member or the Authority.
Equality:	There is no requirement for an equality impact assessment.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no direct health and wellbeing implications from this report.
Social Value	There are no direct social value implications from this report.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

Declarations made by Elected Members are available to view under Councillors' profiles at sandwell.moderngov.co.uk.

Report to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

21 June 2022

Subject:	Complaints and Allegations Update
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer – Surjit Tour
Contact Officer:	Surjit Tour Surjit_Tour@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the update position on complaints received under the Councillor Code of Conduct be received.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The report provides an update on the activity of the Council’s Monitoring Officer in relation to complaints received under the Councillor Code of Conduct arrangements.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		The Council's ethical governance framework and arrangements support the Council toward achieving its strategic objectives and ambition.
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Committee has oversight of the Council's ethical governance framework and arrangements for dealing with complaints received under the Code of Conduct in relation to elected Members.
- 4.2 The table at Appendix A provides an update position on complaints received under the code of conduct. Items 1 and 5 details activity that has been progressed since previously reported to the last meeting of the committee on 23 March 2022. Item 6 is the complaint that has been received since the last meeting of the committee. All items except item 2, have been concluded.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 None – the report is provided for information.

6 Implications

Resources:	The Council is required to ensure that sufficient resources are provided to the Monitoring Officer in order that they are able to exercise their statutory functions.
Legal and Governance:	The Local Government Act 2000 and Localism Act 2011 make provision for the arrangements for dealing with standards related matters.



Risk:	The Council must have in place, arrangements for dealing with matters relating to the conduct of elected members. These are regularly reviewed in line with the best practice recommendations of the Committee for Standards in Public Life
Equality:	There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.
Social Value	There are no direct social value implications arising from this report.

7. Appendices

None.

8. Background Papers

None.



Case Ref	Complainant	Code Provisions/ Ground for complaint	Date received and progress to date	Deadline Red: Amber: Green:	Outcome	Learning identified
1. MC/22/10/21-a	Elected member	<p>This complaint is against 2 elected members.</p> <p>It is alleged that the subject members have breached the code of conduct and their position as Cllrs</p> <p>Potential breaches of the members code of conduct 1.1,1.2, 3.1, 5.1</p>	<p>Complaint received 22/10/21.</p> <p>DMO assessing the complaint</p> <p>Matter referred for investigation 10/12/21</p> <p>Investigation due to be completed 28/2/22</p> <p>Due to availability witness investigation completion delayed. Investigation due to be completed by 18 March 2021</p> <p>Investigation complete.</p> <p>Decision notice sent to parties 13 June 2022</p> <p>Matter to be closed</p>	Green	Matter dealt with through informal resolution through member training and advice and guidance provided to the subject member in relation to conduct at meeting.	The Monitoring Officer provided advice/guidance to all elected members in relation to rules of conduct at meetings.



Case Ref	Complainant	Code Provisions/ Ground for complaint	Date received and progress to date	Deadline Red: Amber: Green:	Outcome	Learning identified
2. MC/ 010322	Member of the public	It is alleged that the subject member has breached the code of conduct Potential breaches of the members code of conduct 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 5.1	Matter referred for investigation.	Green		
3. MC/010322 – 2 (a)	Officer	It is alleged that the subject member has breached the code of conduct Potential breaches of the members code of conduct 1.1,1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 5.1	Decision notice completed 5 April 2022. Parties agreed to deal with matter by way of local resolution though an apology Matter to be closed	Green	Apology provided in writing on 17 May 2022	
4. MC/010322 – 2 (b)	Officer	It is alleged that the subject member has breached the code of conduct Potential breaches of the members code of conduct 1.1,1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 5.1	Decision notice completed 5 April 2022. Insufficient evidence of a breach of the members code of conduct. File to be closed	Green	Insufficient evidence of a breach of the members code of conduct following assessment of complaint by DMO	
5. MC/020322	Member of the Public	It is alleged that the subject member has breached the code of conduct by failing to declare relevant interests on the register.	Decision notice completed 13 June 2022. Matter dealt with by way of local resolution though training	Green	Advice/guidance and training provided in relation declaring interests	



Case Ref	Complainant	Code Provisions/ Ground for complaint	Date received and progress to date	Deadline Red: Amber: Green:	Outcome	Learning identified
		Potential breaches of the members code of conduct 5.1. 9.1	File to be closed.			
6. MC/120422	Member of the public	It is alleged that the subject member has breached the code of conduct Potential breaches of the members code of conduct 1.1,1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 5.1	Decision notice completed 13 June 2022. No breach of the members code of conduct found. File to be closed	Green	Insufficient evidence of a breach of the members code of conduct following assessment of complaint by DMO	



Report to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

21 June 2022

Subject:	Work Programme for the 2022/23 Municipal Year
Director:	Surjit Tour - Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Trisha Newton Trisha_newton@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

That the Committee approves the work programme for 2022/23 which will be kept under review during the year by the Monitoring Officer and the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 A draft work programme for 2022/2023 is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration. The programme covers the areas that are within the remit of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee under its current terms of reference.
- 1.2 In addition Sub-Committees of the Standards Committee will deal with any case work.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		High standards of conduct are an essential part of good corporate governance and this in turn has a direct relationship with the delivery of high quality services. A planned work programme will help the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee in promoting high ethical standards.
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

The work programme will be reviewed at each meeting. All outstanding issues from the last municipal year have been carried through.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 There are no alternative options. The matters outlined in the work programme fall within the remit of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee.

6 Implications

Resources:	There are no resources arising directly from this report.
Legal and Governance:	Whilst there is no longer a statutory requirement to establish a Standards Committee, there is a need to promote high ethical standards so the Council has agreed to continue with an Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee as part of its arrangements to deal with standards.
Risk:	There are no risks arising directly from this report.
Equality:	
Health and Wellbeing:	
Social Value	

7. Appendices

Draft work programme for the 2022-23 municipal year



8. Background Papers

None



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Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee Work Programme 2022/23

21 June 2022

- Appointment to Sub Committees/Standards Working Group
- The Local Government Disqualification Act 2022
- Government Response to Committee on Standards in Public Life Ethical Standards Review
- Complaints Update (Standing Item)
- Gifts and Hospitality (Standing Item)
- Work Programme 2022/23 (Standing Item)

27 September 2022

- Member Development Programme
- Member Portal update
- Networking Opportunities with Neighbouring Authorities
- Committee on Standards in Public Life – Annual Report
- Training on Social Media
- Lobbying
- Duty to Promote
- Review of Independent Persons – Recruitment Process/Remuneration
- Review of the Composition of Committee and Operation
- Complaints Update
- Gifts and Hospitality
- National Cases for information

6 December 2022

- DBS Checks
- Review – Personal Safety for Elected Members
- Member Development Programme Update
- Register of Members' Interests – Annual Review
- Review/Effectiveness of Member Code of Conduct and Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints under the Code
- Complaints Update
- Gifts and Hospitality
- National cases for information

7 March 2023

- Annual Report of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee
- Review of CoSiPL Best Practice Recommendations
- Member Development Update
- Complaints Update
- Gifts and Hospitality
- National cases for information