

# **Protocol for the Informal Resolution of Concerns in Relation to the Members' Code of Conduct**

## Purpose of the Protocol

The Council has formal statutory procedures in place to deal with complaints about member misconduct. You can complain about a member breaching any part of the Council's Members' Code of Conduct which may result in your complaint being referred to the Standards Committee. However, most concerns that are raised about the conduct of members are not so serious as to warrant formal complaints or investigation. This Protocol sets out a process for you to deal with the less serious misconduct which may arise. The intent of the Protocol is to deal with concerns about the conduct of members informally wherever possible. Informal resolution is often more expeditious, less costly and more mutually satisfactory. This Protocol gives you an opportunity to deal with your concern informally through the leader of your political group. Where your complaint involves concerns about the leader himself then the formal process is likely to be more appropriate.

You are encouraged to initially pursue this informal resolution procedure as a means of stopping and remedying a behaviour or activity that is concerning you and which may be prohibited by the Council's Members' Code of Conduct. However, this Protocol does not prevent you at any stage from instead following the formal complaints procedure if you so wish.

Concerns raised by you about the conduct of other members (excluding your political group leader) will be addressed in the first instance by the leader of your political group.

## Informal Resolution Procedure

1. If you have identified or witnessed behaviour or any activity by a member of the Council that you believe is in contravention of the Council's Members' Code of Conduct you should express your concern about the conduct of the member at the first reasonable opportunity to the leader of your political group.
2. In addressing a concern, the leader of your group may meet with you and advise you that in his view the behaviour or activity is either likely to contravene the Code of Conduct or not. The leader of your political group may also make other informal enquiries and attempt to resolve the concern informally.

He may, for example, discuss the matter with the leader of the relevant political group, the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer. The leader should involve you in this process and should seek to deal with your concerns expeditiously.

3. Where you have expressed concern and you are willing to pursue an informal resolution of your concern, the leader of your political group shall confirm to you the details of the informal resolution. The leader shall involve you in this process of reaching the informal resolution.
4. The leader of your political group may then consider that your concern has been satisfactorily resolved or that it is not serious enough to warrant further consideration or formal complaint.
5. Where you have expressed a concern and the leader of your political group decides that further action is required or that a formal complaint should be made, he shall inform you at the first reasonable opportunity.
6. If you decide at any stage of the process that you wish to pursue the formal process, you should contact the Monitoring Officer for the Complaints Form and information that will help you progress your complaint.