

Agenda

Standards Committee

Date: **Thursday 19 March 2026**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber**

For any further information please contact:

Francesca Whyley

Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer

0115 901 3907

Standards Committee

Membership

Chair Councillor David Brocklebank

Vice-Chair Councillor Paul Feeney

Councillor Michael Adams
Councillor Andrew Ellwood
Councillor Andrew Meads
Councillor Martin Smith
Councillor Clive Towsey-Hinton
Councillor Russell Whiting
Rosalie Hawks
Louise Kopyrko

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Responsibility of committee:

Within their terms of reference the Standards Committee will be responsible for:

- a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of the council;
- b) assisting members and any co-opted members of the Council to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- e) advising, training or arranging to train members and any co-opted members of the council on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- f) performing the functions set out in (a) - (e) above in respect of the parish councils in the Borough;
- g) granting dispensations to members and any co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;
- h) dealing with any reports from the Monitoring Officer on any matter;

- i) advising on what should be entered into the register of interests for members and co-opted members;
- j) dealing with matters relating to the recruitment of co-opted independent and parish members of the Standards Committee;
- k) dealing with matters relating to the recruitment of the Independent Person and to make recommendations to Council as to the appointment of the Independent Person.
- l) approving all strategies, policies, protocols and procedural documents that fall within the remit of the Committee (excluding budget and policy framework items).

AGENDA

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- 7 Update on Code of Conduct Complaints** To Follow
A report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer
- 8 Any other item which the Chair considers urgent.**

MINUTES STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday 23 October 2025

Councillor Paul Feeney (Chair)

Councillor David Brocklebank	Councillor Clive Towsey-Hinton
Councillor Michael Adams	Councillor Russell Whiting
Councillor Andrew Ellwood	Rosalie Hawks
Councillor Andrew Meads	Louise Kopyrko
Councillor Martin Smith	

Absent: Mr J.R Baggaley

Officers in Attendance: F Whyley, N Osei and L Squires

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS.

No apologies for absences were received.

33 TO APPROVE, AS A CORRECT RECORD, THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26/06/2025.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the above meeting, having been circulated, be approved as a correct record.

34 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

None.

35 CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW

A report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer was circulated prior to the meeting to seek approval to postpone a review of the Council's Member Code of Conduct to 2026/27.

A motion was made and seconded to establish a working group to review the drafted social media guidelines.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- 1) Members note the current position on the Government's consultation on the Standards regime and agree to a review of the Gedling Borough Council Code of Conduct in 2026/27.

- 2) Members support the development of social media guidelines for Councillors to support the Code of Conduct.
- 3) Committee agrees to establish a cross-party working group to assist the Monitoring Officer in the review and creation of social media guidelines for Councillors.

36 UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

A report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer was circulated prior to the meeting to inform members of the Standards Committee of complaints received between 26 June 2025 and 23 October 2025.

Resolved

That:

- 1) The report be noted.

37 ANY OTHER ITEM WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT.

None.

The meeting finished at 6.17 pm

Signed by Chair:
Date:



Report to Standards Committee

Subject: Social Media Guidance

Date: 19 March 2026

Author: Monitoring Officer

Purpose

To seek approval of the Social Media Guidance for Councillors.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) Members approve the Social Media Guidance at Appendix 1**

1 Background

- 1.1 In October 2025, Committee agreed to the creation of a cross-party working group to develop Social Media Guidance for Councillors. It was recognised that some guidance in this area may be useful for Councillors in particular with regard to how social media misuse may result in potential Code of Conduct complaints.
- 1.2 On 25th February, the Monitoring Officer presented draft Social Media Guidance to the working group to consider. In attendance at the working group meeting were Councillors Brocklebank, Feeney, Towsey-Hinton Martin Smith, Meads, Whiting and co-opted Members Louise Kopyrko and Rosalie Hawkes. The draft guidance was based on the Local Government Association's Social Media Guidance for Members. The working group made a number of observations on the guidance including:
 - There should be reference to the use of images in social media with particular regard to safeguarding and data protection

- The guidance should align with any wider media guidance for Councillors
- That the document should be effectively promoted to members if approved

1.3 Following revisions to the guidance after feedback from the working group, the Social Media Guidance at Appendix 1 is now recommended to Committee for approval.

2 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that the Social Media Guidance at Appendix 1 be approved. If approved, the guidance will be promoted to Members by the Communications team and available on the Council's website.

3 Alternative Options

3.2 That Members do not approve the guidance or propose further changes. The guidance has been developed in consultation with the working group and having regard to similar guidance from other authorities.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 The guidance supports the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors but is not a legal requirement. The guidance does provide information on using social media safely and lawfully.

6 Equalities Implications

6.1 The Code of Conduct does require members to act in a way that is in accordance with equality obligations in line with the Equality Act 2010. In support of this, the social media guidance supports Member understanding of how to use social media safely, securely and without resulting in breaches of the Code of Conduct.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

7.1 There are no carbon reduction/sustainability implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Social Media Guidance

9 Background Papers

9.1 None

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer

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Social Media Guidance for Members

Serving people, Improving lives

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Version control number: 1.0	
Date approved:	Approved by: Standards Working Group
Date of next review:	
Job title of responsible officer: Fran Whyley, Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer	

1. Purpose of this Guidance

- 1.1. Effective communication is at the heart of success for any councillor. Over recent years social media has transformed how elected representatives communicate with their communities. There are many key benefits to using social media as a councillor and it is recognised that there is a range of ability and frequency of use of social media as a communication tool by councillors. Using social media, in particular highly used platforms like Facebook, enables councillors to engage regularly with many residents across all age groups and demographics including residents who are much less likely to read leaflets or attend council meetings.
- 1.2. This guidance is intended to provide support for councillors in utilising social media and complements the general rules under the Code of Conduct for Members. This guidance provides advice on how to stay safe and secure online, how to use social media sensibly and responsibly, in line with corporate policy. The guidance sets out the potential risks and benefits of social media usage and gives some practical tips to ensure councillors don't fall foul of any legal or security issues.

2. What is Social Media?

- 2.1 Social media is the term to describe websites and online tools which allow people to interact with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This could, for example, be blogs, and postings on a wide range of social media platforms including (but not limited to) Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram etc.
- 2.2 Used well, social media can enable councillors to provide up to date information to residents and communities in a cost-effective way. It can help them:
 - i. Promote the work they are doing to a variety of audiences.
 - ii. Promote the work of the council to a variety of audiences.
 - iii. Engage with residents, businesses and community groups.
 - iv. Listen to conversations and issues going on in their local area.
- 2.3 There are many social media platforms available to use and different social media platforms enable councillors to communicate with different members of the community. Instagram is focused on images and engagements with the images. Facebook remains one of the widest reaching platforms for councillors and it is recommended as the best place to start with social media.
- 2.4 As a councillor, you need to use your time effectively – you're a busy person! The Local Government Association advice is to start by prioritising one key social media platform and become confident and impactful on it before deciding to move on to others.

3. Keeping you safe

- 3.1 Make sure if you are using social media that you use secure log in details, don't use your councillor email for example as this may be well known.
- 3.2 Make sure you maintain a divide between your personal and family life and your public profile. If you post material on your councillor page, even if it is private, you could be seen to be acting as a councillor and the Code of Conduct will apply.

- 3.3 Ensure appropriate privacy settings are applied to whichever platform you choose to use.
- 3.4 Be aware that councillors are personally responsible for any content they publish on any form. It is highly recommended that you don't post or share anything online that you would not be comfortable saying or sharing in a public meeting.
- 3.5 Content on social media is available for a long time. Even if you delete it, someone could have easily screenshot it or used it elsewhere. As a councillor, you need to think carefully about what and how much content you put in the public domain.
- 3.6 Don't share your personal details online such as your phone number or personal photos with family members or friends. Whilst you might be comfortable being in the public glare, consider whether your family, friends, work colleagues or neighbours would be as comfortable.
- 3.7 As with emails you need to be alert to phishing scams, cons or malicious software.
- 3.8 Beware of those who seek to use social media in a negative or abusive way, sometimes referred to as "trolls". The best advice is not to respond to such individuals and consider deleting or hiding their comments.
- 3.9 Do not be afraid to block followers or individuals who are persistently abusive to you. You should also consider reporting such conduct to the police. Similarly, where offensive content is posted by others, you should delete it and report it.
- 3.10 Where you are posting photographs you have taken on social media you should ensure that you have appropriate consents of people who may be featured in the image to ensure you are not disclosing personal data of others and that images are used appropriately.

4. Responsibilities of Councillors

- 4.1 There's a golden rule for using social media, which is: if you are unsure about posting something, stop and ask for advice first before doing anything else. The Council's Communications and Engagement team and/or Legal team can offer advice and support.

Social media works in the public domain. Once something is published it is 'out there' for everyone to see and very easily it can:

- go viral,
- be altered or changed without your consent,
- be taken out of context or
- be shared around the world.

Using social media as an elected (or co-opted) member of a council is very different from using it as someone who isn't. Councillors have additional responsibilities because of their position.

- 4.2 Councillors are personally responsible for the social media content they create, publish and share. Being a councillor will not prevent someone else pursuing

legal action following the publication of an untrue statement. In such a situation, it is likely that you will be held personally liable. No indemnity from the Council will be available. This could include 'liking' or sharing someone else's content publicly as this could be viewed as endorsement.

- 4.3 Councillors should be mindful of the difference between fact and opinion. They also play a central role in preventing the spread of disinformation. Think twice before you press 'share'. If using Artificial Intelligence in the creation of posts, care should be taken to still ensure that the contents are accurate and in context.
- 4.4 As a councillor you are a representation of your office and your Council. Care should be taken when posting about Council business to ensure it is an accurate account and does not risk bringing your office or the Council into disrepute.
- 4.5 Be careful about your "friends" on social media, you shouldn't request or accept a Council employee or contractor providing services to the council as a "friend" on a social networking site where this suggests close personal association. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not apply to sites which are intended as a neutral, professional connections registry (such as LinkedIn) or to sites where there are no privacy restrictions and anyone can effectively view content. As a councillor, you need to be aware of the perception of bias or special treatment.
- 4.6 As a councillor you are in a position of authority. When posting comments on social media you must ensure they are respectful and that the platform is not used in any way to attack, insult, abuse, defame or otherwise make negative, offensive or discriminatory comments about Council staff, service users, their family or friends, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, other councillors or the Council.
- 4.7 Safeguarding issues are paramount because social media sites are often misused by offenders. Safeguarding is everyone's business – if you have any concerns about other site users, you have a responsibility to report these.
- 4.8. Be careful not to give the impression that your personal website or social media account is an official Council website or account, for example by misleading use of the Council's logo. It is however acceptable to share the Council's public social media content through your own social media account/s.
- 4.9 On social media, councillors should also keep in mind their responsibility in relation to confidential information, copyright, data protection, the pre-election period and exempt reports.
- 4.10 Councillors are still subject to the Code of Conduct on social media where there is an explicit link between the content posted and Council business or your role as councillor. As a general rule, councillors should demonstrate good conduct at all times and so should act as though their public engagement on social media falls in scope of the Code of Conduct.
- 4.11 When posting to social media you should remember that:
 - you are an elected representative of your Council;
 - what you post can affect the reputation of your Council;
 - your Council is a corporate decision-making body – you can't, independently, make decisions for the council on social media;

- some issues and communications are best left to your Council's official social media channels, which are usually managed by officers;
- having a single voice or message can be critical in some situations – for example, in the event of major flooding;
- you don't have to respond to or comment on everything on social media – and sometimes it's best not to.

Think before you press 'publish'! There is a simple test. If you would be reluctant to say something face-to-face to a group of strangers in the street, then you probably shouldn't say it on social media.

5. Relevant Elements of the Members' Code of Conduct:

- 5.1 Where you are posting on a councillor social media platform or sometimes even if you are posting on a private platform about Council business, the Code of Conduct will be engaged. The following sections of the Code are relevant:
- 5.2 You must treat others with respect - do not use social media to make personal attacks or indulge in rude, disrespectful or offensive comments.
- 5.3 You must comply with equality laws – do not publish anything that might be seen as discriminatory against any protected characteristic.
- 5.4 You must not bully or harass anyone – do not say anything, particularly if it is part of a series of similar comments about a person or on a theme that might be construed as bullying or intimidation.
- 5.5 You must not bring your office or the Council into disrepute – you should not publish anything that could reasonably be perceived as reflecting badly upon or lowering the reputation of you or the Council.
- 5.6 You must not disclose confidential information - you must not, in your use of social media, just as in any other circumstances, disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature. Inadvertent leaks of the Council's confidential information are more likely to take place when a councillor is using social media, rather than, say, when they are carefully drafting a letter for publication in the local paper. This may be because of the more immediate, conversational, off- the cuff nature of much social media communication. Members must be careful to apply exactly the same standards to their social media communications as they would to statements made in a more formal context.

6. General

- 6.1 The Council wishes to encourage Members' use of technology including social media for effective communication. This guidance is intended to help Members use social media in a way that avoids legal and reputational risk. Councillors are required to engage with any training provided by the Council on use of social media.

7. Advice

[guidance for councillors](#) and requires all councillors to use it if they choose to engage on social media. The guidance has been incorporated into this document. Further guidance can also be accessed.

The Communications and Engagement team or the Legal team (legalservices@gedling.gov.uk) are happy to help Members by providing additional advice and guidance as appropriate.

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Report to Standards Committee

Subject: Review of the Code of Conduct

Date: 19 March 2026

Author: Monitoring Officer

Purpose

To update members on the Government's response to a consultation on changes to the Standards Regime.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) Members note the content of the report.**

1 Background

1.1 At the October meeting, Committee agreed that a review of the Council's Code of Conduct be postponed pending an update from Government on changes to the Standards regime. At that point in time there was no update on the Government's position. Subsequently on 11 November 2025 an update was published.

1.2 In December 2024, the Government launched a consultation on changes to the standards regime. The consultation ended on 26 February 2025. There were 2092 responses to the consultation and responses generally demonstrated an appetite for reform in this area.

1.3 Full details of the consultation responses are attached, however in summary the Government have expressed their intention to reform the current regime through legislative change. The key measures will include:

- the introduction of a mandatory code of conduct, which will include a behavioural code, for all local authority types and tiers
- a requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards

committees, to include provisions on the constitution of standards committees to ensure objectivity, accountability and transparency

- the requirement that all principal authorities offer individual support during any investigation into code of conduct allegations to both the complainant and the councillor subject to the allegation
- the introduction at the authority level of a 'right for review' for both complainant and the subject elected member to have the case reassessed on grounds that will be set out in legislation
- powers for authorities to suspend elected members for a maximum of 6 months for serious code of conduct breaches, with the option to withhold allowances during suspension for the most serious breaches and introduce premises and facilities bans either in addition or as standalone sanctions
- in response to the most serious allegations involving police investigation, or where sentencing is pending, the introduction of powers to suspend elected members on an interim basis for an initial period of 3 months which, if extended, will require regular review
- a new disqualification criterion for any elected member subject to the maximum period of suspension more than once within 5 years
- the creation of a new national appeals function, to consider appeals from elected members to decisions to suspend them and/or withhold allowances, and for complainants if they consider their complaint was mishandled. Any appeal submitted will only be permitted after complainant or elected member has invoked their 'right for review' of the local standards committee decision has been invoked and that process is completed

1.4 In addition to the measures above there are a number of other proposals included within the Government response including the development of a best practice guide for handling complaints, the mandatory publication of investigation outcomes whether or not a breach of the Code is determined, provide additional support for those affected by complaints on top of the Independent Person role.

1.5 Timescales for legislative change are not yet clear but updates will be provided to Committee when available.

2 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that members note this update report.

3 Alternative Options

3.2 None

4 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 As set out within the report.

6 Equalities Implications

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

7.1 There are no carbon reduction/sustainability implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

8.1 None

9 Background Papers

9.1 [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer

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Report to Standards Committee

Subject: Appointment of Independent Person and Reserve Independent Person

Date: 19 March 2026

Author: Monitoring Officer

Purpose

To seek approval to recommend to Council the appointment of the current Independent Person David Walsh and Reserve Independent Person John Baggaley for a further two - year term or until the authority is dissolved through Local Government Reorganisation, whichever is sooner.

Recommendation

That Members:

- 1) Recommend to Council the appointment of David Walsh as Independent Person and John Baggaley as Reserve Independent Person for a further 2 year term or until the dissolution of the authority following Local Government Reorganisation.

1 Background

1.1 The Localism Act 2011 ("the Act") requires that the Council's arrangements for dealing with allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct include provision for the appointment of at least one independent person, whose views are to be sought and taken into account by the authority before it makes its decision on an allegation that it has decided to investigate. The arrangements provided by the Council include such provision.

1.2 The Independent Person(s)-

- Must be consulted by the authority before it makes finding on an allegation that it has decided to investigate;
- May be consulted by the authority in respect of a standards complaint at any other stage; and

- May be consulted by a member or co-opted member of the Borough, Council or of a Parish Council against whom a complaint has been made.
- 1.3 The Act requires the Council to appoint at least one Independent Person, however given that there may be occasion where the Independent Person is unable to act for example due to holiday, illness or where there may be a conflict of interest, the Council has also previously appointed a reserve Independent Person. In addition, the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) best practice recommendations recommend an authority should have access to at least two independent persons.
- 1.4 In July 2024, David Walsh was appointed as the Independent Person for a period of 2 years and John Baggaley was appointed as Reserve Independent Person for the same period. Both have been invaluable in the roles for the last two years.
- 1.5 In light of the fact that the current appointment of the Independent Person and Reserve is due to end in July 2026, consideration needs to be given as to whether a further recruitment exercise should be undertaken to appoint to the roles going forward.
- 1.6 Historically, a full recruitment exercise has been undertaken with applicants interviewed by Members of the Committee. Response to the recruitment however has been limited and the current Reserve Independent Person was the previous Independent Person for a number of years before becoming the Reserve. Whilst the CSPL recommend, that Independent Persons should be appointed for a 2 year period only it is not always easy to fill the roles.
- 1.7 The current Independent Person was a new appointment in 2024 and has developed well in the role. The Reserve Independent Person has significance experience. In light of the changes to the authority as a result of Local Government Reorganisation approval is sought to extend the current arrangements until completion of LGR.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Committee recommend the appointment of the current Independent Person and Reserve Independent Person for a further two years or until the completion of LGR whichever is sooner. This will prevent the need for the expense and time of a recruitment exercise which has historically had limited response and will enable experienced Independent Persons to support the organisation and the current Monitoring Officer and Deputy through to the conclusion of LGR.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to appoint an Independent Person and reserve, however, this would be contrary to the requirements of the Act which requires an Independent Person be appointed. It is considered necessary to have a reserve if possible, to ensure complaints can be managed where the Independent Person is unable to act, for example due to a conflict of interest, illness or absence. In addition, the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) best practice recommendations recommend an authority should have access to at least two independent persons and this is reflected in the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints.
- 3.2 Committee could recommend a fresh recruitment exercise to the roles, however this would take resource and time at a time when capacity is stretched. Historically the response to the recruitment has been limited and even if new applicants were to come forward, it does take some time to embed into the organisation and understand the way complaints are managed and the role of the Independent Person. The current postholders have significant experience. Whilst the CSPL recommends two years as best practice it is not a legal requirement.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 On appointment, the Independent Person and reserve will be entitled to an allowance, agreed by the Council, which can be met from existing budgets.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There is a legal requirement to have an Independent person. There is no such requirement in terms of a Reserve Independent Person, however, it is recommended best practice by the CSPL. The CSPL also recommend a two year term for IPs however this is not a legal requirement. Appointment to the role is a function of the Council.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 None

9 Background papers

9.1 None

10 Reasons for Recommendations

10.1 To ensure the Council has an Independent Person and Reserve Independent Person in position from July 2026.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by the Chief Financial Officer

Date:

Drafted by the Monitoring Officer