

Report to Standards Committee

Subject: Review of the Code of Conduct

Date: 23 October 2025

Author: Monitoring Officer

Purpose

To seek approval to postpone a review of the Council's Member Code of Conduct to 2026/27 pending the outcome of the Government consultation on standards.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) Members note the current position on the Government's consultation on the Standards regime; and**
- 2) Agree to a review of the Gedling Borough Council Code of Conduct in 2026/27, or when required, following an update from Government, whichever is sooner.**
- 3) Members support the development of social media guidelines for Councillors to support the Code of Conduct.**

1 Background

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires authorities to have a Code of Conduct for Members, which must include details of Member Interests and reflect the Nolan Principles. This Council adopted a new Code of Conduct in January 2024 following a review of the Code of Conduct by this Committee and a consultation. The current code reflects the Local Government Association's Model Code of Conduct.

- 1.2 The Committee on Standards in Public Life (“CSPL”) Report – Review of Local Government Ethical Standards report, published in January 2019 recommended that authorities should review their Code of Conduct annually and should engage with relevant stakeholders when doing so. This was a best practice recommendation which this Committee agreed to in July 2019.
- 1.3 In December 2024, the Government launched a consultation on changes to the standards regime. The consultation ended on 26 February 2025 and the feedback is being considered. The key areas for change included:
- the introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England
 - a requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards committees to make decisions on code of conduct breaches, and publish the outcomes of all formal investigations
 - the introduction of the power for all local authorities (including combined authorities) to suspend councillors or mayors found in serious breach of their code of conduct and, as appropriate, interim suspension for the most serious and complex cases that may involve police investigations
 - a new category of disqualification for gross misconduct and those subject to a sanction of suspension more than once in a 5-year period
 - a role for a national body to deal with appeals

In addition, the consultation seeks views on how to empower victims affected by councillor misconduct to come forward and what additional support would be appropriate to consider.

- 1.4 The timescales for feedback on the consultation are not clear but given the changes that are likely, including potentially a new mandatory code, it does not seem like a review of the Council’s Code of Conduct at the current time is the best use of resources. In addition, there have been no changes to the Model Code of Conduct that would merit a further review of the Code at this point in time. The current Code of Conduct remains fit for purpose and Member training on the Code is being refreshed currently.
- 1.5 When looking at the effectiveness of the Code, the one area that could be strengthened is guidance around social media use. There have been a number of incidents reported of social media being used where the content is not always accurate and occasions where content has been offensive. The LGA guidance does provide some guidance on social media but some updated specific guidelines for members would be helpful. Guidance for staff has recently been updated.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 In light of the potential changes to the standards regime nationally and given that the current Code of Conduct remains fit for purpose, it is proposed that any review of the Council's Code of Conduct be postponed until 2026/27 or until Government announces any required changes, whichever comes first. Whilst this is not in accordance with CSPL best practice it is not considered to be an effective use of resource at the current time.
- 2.2 In order to support members in relation to social media usage specifically linked to Code of Conduct requirements, it is proposed that members support the creation of social media guidelines to be brought back to this Committee for consideration.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.2 That Members seek a review of the Code of Conduct in 2025/26 in line with best practice. This is not considered to be an effective use of resource, in addition such a review would involve some level of consultation and if the national position changes this may cause some confusion.

4 Financial Implications

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

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires authorities to have a Code of Conduct for Members, which must include details of Member Interests and reflect the Nolan Principles. The CSPL best practice recommendations were agreed by this Committee in July 2019 which included a review of the Code of Conduct on an annual basis. These are recommendations not legal requirement and ultimately it is for individual authorities to determine the content of their Code of Conduct.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report. The Code itself does require members to act in a way that is in accordance with equality obligations in line with the Equality Act 2010.

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 - GOV.UK](#)

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer