

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