

Public Report
Standards and Ethics Committee

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Standards and Ethics Committee – 12 June 2025

Report Title

Review of the Code of Conduct

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

N/A

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

A report requesting that the Standards and Ethics Committee reviews the Code of Conduct.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee reviews the Code of Conduct and suggests any amendments which would then be reported to the Council for consideration.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Member Code of Conduct

Background Papers

CSPL – Review of Local Government Ethical Standards

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Review of the Member Code of Conduct

1. Background

- 1.1 By way of background, one of the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life “landmark” report into Local Government Ethical Standards in 2019 was that the LGA review the current Model Member Code of Conduct and prepare a revised model Member Code of Conduct.
- 1.2 As such the LGA held a several events around Civility in Public Life with a range of stakeholders and carried out an extensive consultation exercise which included
 - Workshops of members and Monitoring Officers to discuss the approach and content of the revised Code
 - Webinars conducted with over 1000 participants
 - Over 1600 written responses to the consultation received.
 - Comments, questions and feedback provided during the webinar sessions
 - Stakeholder roundtable to discuss the response and next steps
- 1.4 A draft model Member Code of Conduct was provided and reported to this Committee in June 2020. Members provided their views in respect of the draft model Code of Conduct and a consultation response was submitted subsequently on behalf of the Council, representing those views. A second Draft model Code of Conduct was reported back to this Committee in November 2020 which members commented upon, and which feedback was again submitted to the LGA.
- 1.5 The final approved version of the LGA Model Code of Conduct was approved by this Committee in January 2021 and adopted by the Council at the full Council meeting in May 2021.
- 1.6 It is now considered appropriate to review the Code of Conduct (Appendix 1) while bearing in mind that the Model Code of Conduct as provided by the LGA remains as it was drafted in 2020. The Monitoring Officer has reviewed the Code of Conduct and is happy with its current content. Members are however requested to review the Code of Conduct and suggest any amendments they feel would be beneficial.
- 1.7 It should also be borne in mind, as members may recall, the Government recently consulted seeking views on introducing measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England, partly to ensure consistency of approach among councils in addressing breaches of their member code of conduct. One of the issues consulted on, was the possible introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England, as opposed to the current optional model code.
- 1.8 The introduction to the Code of Conduct, sets out the importance of the Code of Conduct along with the role of the Councillor and holding Councillors to account, and as taken from the LGA website is set out below:

Local Government Association Model Member Code of Conduct

The Local Government Association (LGA) is providing this Model Member Code of Conduct as part of its work on supporting the sector to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance.

The role of councillor in all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. In voting for a local councillor, the public is imbuing that person and position with their trust. As such, it is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. The conduct of an individual councillor affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to and want to participate with. We want to continue to attract individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances who understand the responsibility they take on and are motivated to make a positive difference to their local communities.

All councils are required to have a local Member Code of Conduct. This Model Member Code of Conduct has been developed in consultation with the sector and is offered as a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments. The LGA will undertake an annual review of the Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, particularly with respect to advances in technology, social media and any relevant changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code, whilst the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to town and parish councils.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Key issues are set out above.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Recommendations are set out above.

4. Consultation on Proposal

4.1 The consultation process undertaken in respect of the Model Code of Conduct for Members is set out above.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 If amendments to the Code of Conduct for Members are recommended by the Committee they would be proposed for adoption by the Council to the next available meeting of the Council.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 Any work undertaken by Legal Services in dealing with this matter is within the budget for Legal Services.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Council and the Standards and Ethics Committee have a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. An appropriate Code of Conduct is an important part of complying with that duty.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 None.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 None.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 None

11. Implications for Partners

- 11.1 None.

12. Risks and Mitigation

- 12.1 There is a risk that if the Council does not have an appropriate Code of Conduct, then public trust in local democracy could be undermined.

13. Accountable Officer(s)

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