

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Standards and Ethics Committee - 15 January 2026

Report Title

Standards and Ethics Committee – Consultation results and Govt Response - Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England

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 setting out the consultation results and Government's response to the Consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the content of the report and receive further updates as the relevant legislation progresses.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Consultation results and Govt response to the consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England.

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Standards and Ethics Committee - Consultation results and Govt Response - Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England

1. Background

1.1 As members may recall the Government conducted a consultation during December 2024 to February 2025, entitled "Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England". The purpose of the consultation was stated as follows:

This consultation seeks views on introducing a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England, and measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England to ensure consistency of approach amongst councils investigating serious breaches of their member codes of conduct, including the introduction of the power of suspension.

1.2 The government has now considered the substantial number of consultation responses and published its response which is at [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#) and at Appendix 1.

2. Key Issues

2.1 In summary the government intends to implement the following measures, which will require changes to existing legislation, and which it is stated will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time allows.

- Mandatory code of conduct for all local authority types and tiers, including a behavioural code.
- Principal authorities must convene formal standards committees with rules ensuring objectivity, accountability, and transparency.
- Authorities must provide individual support during investigations to both complainants and councillors against whom a complaint is made.
- Introduce a statutory 'right for review' for complainants and councillors to have cases reassessed.
- Grant authorities power to suspend elected members for up to 6 months for serious breaches, with options to withhold allowances and impose premises/facility bans.
- Allow interim suspension for up to 3 months in cases involving police investigation or pending sentencing, with regular review for extensions.

- New disqualification rule for members suspended for the maximum period more than once within 5 years.
- Establish a national appeals function for suspension or allowance decisions, accessible only after local review processes are completed.

Members are requested to note the contents of Consultation results and Government response and consider any matters likely to arise from the forthcoming legislation and how this may affect the operation of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The recommended proposal is that the Committee considers the Government's consultation response and keeps abreast of likely legislative changes of relevance to its work. The alternative option of the Committee not considering such matters is not appropriate.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 N/A

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

The Government has stated that the legislative changes necessary to implement the recommended new measures will be made as soon as parliamentary time allows.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The officer time in dealing with this issue is met within existing Legal Services resources.

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. Pursuant to the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to adopt an appropriate Code of Conduct and arrangements for the investigation of allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct. This consultation response is recommending measures which would strengthen these arrangements and in particular the possible sanctions available to the local authority.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

None

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

None

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

None

11. Implications for Partners

None

12. Risks and Mitigation

None

13. Accountable Officer(s)

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