

STANDARDS AND ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE

DATE	8 th April 2026
REPORT OF	Monitoring Officer
SUBJECT	Strengthening the Standards and Conduct framework for local authorities – government response
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

Good governance arrangements and ethical standards contribute directly to the achievement of the Council's strategic aims.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks to update the Committee on the government response to the consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee notes the content of the report.
2. That the Committee receives further updates as the relevant legislation progresses.

REASONS FOR DECISION

Considering the consultation response and keeping abreast of legislative changes of relevance to its work is prudent and supports the council in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 This report seeks to update the Committee on the government response to the consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework of local authorities.
- 1.2 A report was presented to Committee on 5th February 2025. A response was submitted by the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair, on behalf of the Committee on 18th February 2025.
- 1.3 The consultation sought views on a whole system reform of the standards and conduct framework for local government, reflecting the government's ambition to introduce a clearer and consistently applied framework for local government in England.
- 1.4 The government published its response to the consultation in November 2025 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in->

[england/outcome/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england-consultation-results-and-government-response.](#)

- 1.5 In summary the government intend to implement the following measures, which will require changes to existing legislation, which is stated will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time allows. The measures are:
- The introduction of a mandatory code of conduct, which will include a behavioural code, for all local authority 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 of 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 and that process is completed.
- 1.6 The Government will engage further with sector representatives to consider the specific requirements prior to legislating and to develop best practice guidance.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

The report provides an opportunity to promote and maintain good governance and high standard of ethical behaviour in place in North East Lincolnshire. There is the risk of loss of credibility of the Council if these standards fall.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option of the Committee not considering the changes is not appropriate.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Setting high ethical standards is an important building block for councils in developing their community leadership role and achieving the Council's objectives. Robust standards arrangements are needed to safeguard local democracy, maintain high standards of conduct, and to protect ethical practice in local government. The changes in legislation will provide us with an opportunity to review arrangements and make appropriate amendments to align with any changes.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no direct financial considerations arising from the content of the report.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct children and young people implications arising from the content of the report.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct climate change, nature recovery and environmental implications arising from the content of the report.

8. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct public health, health inequalities and marmot implications arising from the content of the report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the content of the report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Pursuant to the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to adopt a 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.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources implications arising from the content of the report.

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

All wards are affected.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england/outcome/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england-consultation-results-and-government-response>

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