

Report for:**Standards Committee**

Date of Meeting:	4 February 2026
Subject:	Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England
Cabinet Member:	Cllr L Taylor, Leader of the Council
Responsible Officer:	Maria De Leiburne - Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

The purpose of this report is to consider the Government's response to the consultation.

Recommendation(s):

It be RESOLVED: That the Government's response to the consultation on Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England and the proposed legislative changes be noted.

Section 2 – Report**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 As Members are aware between 18 December 2024 and 26 February 2025, the Government published a consultation 'Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for local authorities in England'.
- 1.2 The Government's consultation on Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for councils in England sought views on a whole system reform of the Standards and Conduct Framework for local government as per the earlier report to Standards Committee on the 3 February 2025. The proposed reforms reflected the Government's ambition to introduce a clearer and consistently applied standards and conduct framework for local government in England.

- 1.3 On the 11 November 2025, the Government published the findings and its response to the consultation, which can be found here:
<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#ministerial-foreword>
- 1.4 The Government received 2,092 responses to the consultation which clearly indicated a widespread appetite for system reform.

2.0 Summary

- 2.1. In summary, the Government plan to legislate for a whole system reform of the current regime as set out in the Localism Act 2011. The measure will include:
 - the introduction of a mandatory Code of Conduct, which will include a behavioural code, for all local authority types and tiers. (This will allow local authorities the flexibility to develop their own guidance and protocols that must align with the mandatory code but will not form part of the code itself;)
 - 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. It should be noted in this regard that a dedicated Standards Committee is already in place at this Council;
 - 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. (Again, it should be noted that Members at the Council are already entitled to speak to one of Council's Independent Persons in connection with the complaint made against them along with the Monitoring Officer providing impartial advice / support to both the complainant and subject member when a complaint is to be or has been referred for consideration;)
 - 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 six 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 to 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 three 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 five years; and
- the creation of a new national appeals function, to consider appeals from elected members relating to decisions to suspend them and/or withhold allowances, and for other 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.

2.2 The Council now awaits the necessary legislation which will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the proposals within this report.

Legal Implications

The authority or any successor unitary authority will be required to implement any legislative changes to the Localism Act 2011 and to its standards regime as and when new legislation is passed.

Risk Assessment

None. There are no risks in noting the outcome of the Government's consultation and response. It will, however, be important to manage expectations; before these proposed changes can be relied upon it will require legislative changes to the Localism Act 2011.

Impact on Climate Change

None.

Equalities Impact Assessment

None.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

Our values and priorities – equally important to the 'what' we are trying to achieve, is the 'how' the organisation operates and conducts itself.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151
Date: 27.01.2026

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leiburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 26.1.26

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director
Date: 27.01.2026

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Yes/No)

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Yes/No)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Maria De Leiburne- Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Background papers: None.