

AUDIT COMMITTEE
13 OCTOBER 2025

ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AND MEMBER STANDARDS – UPDATE REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members on issues relevant to member standards and ethical governance.

Summary

2. The report gives members an update of information about issues relevant to member standards since matters were reported to the Committee in April 2025.
3. Also set out in the report are a number of datasets of ethical indicators to assist in monitoring the ethical health of the Council. By reviewing these indicators it is hoped to be able to identify any unusual or significant trends or changes in the volume of data recorded for the relevant period that might provide an alert to any deterioration in the ethical health of the authority.
4. Commentary is included for some data sets to give analysis and explanation for some of the more notable variations. There are no particular issues of concern that have been identified from reviewing the data.

Recommendation

5. Members are asked to note the information presented and to comment as appropriate.

Reasons

6. By having information of this nature:
 - (a) Members will be assisted to perform their role.
 - (b) Members will be able to get a better picture of the ethical health of the authority.

Amy Wennington
Assistant Director, Law and Governance
Monitoring Officer

Background Papers

None – save as mentioned in the text

Amy Wennington: Extension 5490

Council Plan	Strong ethical governance arrangements and standards are important in the delivery of the Council Plan
Addressing inequalities	There is no direct impact
Tackling Climate Change	There is no direct impact
Efficient and effective use of resources	There is no direct impact
Health and Wellbeing	There is no direct health and wellbeing impact
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific issues which relate to crime and disorder
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the budget or policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Update on matters relevant to Ethical Governance and Member Standards

Committee on Standards in Public Life and the Ethics and Integrity Commission

7. The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) advises the Prime Minister, national and local government about ethical standards in public life in England. It monitors, conducts broad inquiries and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders.
8. It was announced in July that a new Ethics and Integrity Commission (EIC) is to be established to drive up standards in public life. The Chair of the CSPL will also be Chair of the EIC.
9. The EIC will have an ambitious remit to uphold the highest ethical standards across the public sector. It will be created by strengthening and reforming the CSPL. Ministers will give the EIC a stronger mandate and an expanded role to help put ethics and integrity at the heart of every public sector organisation.
10. Its wider remit will include a new obligation to report annually to the Prime Minister on the overall health of our standards system, and a new function of regular engagement with public sector bodies to assist them in the development of clear codes of conduct with effective oversight arrangements.
11. The EIC will be responsible for convening and coordinating ethics bodies, formalising cooperation and the sharing of best practice. It will be tasked with improving public understanding of the ethics system and will act as a 'one-stop shop' for members of the public looking for information on standards in public life.
12. For more general information about the CSPL and the wider recent work of the CSPL – this can be viewed from the following link [Committee on Standards in Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/committee-on-standards-in-public-life)

Sensitive Interests

13. The Localism Act makes provision ([Localism Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/22/section/100)) for a member to ask the Monitoring Officer to withhold details of a pecuniary interest, if disclosure could lead to the member or a connected person being subject to violence or intimidation. In such cases details are not included on the register of interests or require to be disclosed at a meeting, but the requirements about non-participation will still apply.
14. Last year, the government encouraged Monitoring Officers to look sympathetically at accommodating requests for the withholding of home addresses on the register of interests where there are legitimate concerns of violence or intimidation. The Monitoring Officer would like to remind Members that this provision exists, that they are to contact her should they wish to make such a request, and provides assurance that any such requests made will be considered in the manner directed by government.

Code of Conduct Training

15. The Monitoring Officer will provide refresher training on the Members' Code of Conduct in October 2025. A session will be held in person and a session will be held

via MS Teams. Members are invited to attend either session.

16. The Monitoring Officer reminds all Members that she is available to advise upon the Code of Conduct at any time however, not just within the dedicated training sessions.

Ethical Indicators

17. Set out in **Appendix 1** are a range of data sets that it is hoped will assist in monitoring the ethical health of the Council. By reviewing the indicators, it will be possible to identify any unusual or significant changes in the volume of data recorded for the relevant period that might provide an alert to any deterioration in the ethical health of the authority.
18. A more detailed breakdown of Member complaints received and outcomes can be found at **Appendix 2**.
19. Member's observations about this information are invited.