

The Standards Committee

LOCAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE AND STANDING ORDERS

9.1 Standards Committee

9.1.1 The Standards Committee is appointed by Council at its Annual Meeting

9.1.2 The purpose of the Standards Committee is to oversee and develop the Council's ethical framework which includes, but is not limited to, the following policies:

Councillor Code of Conduct

Overall standards of conduct and ethics of Members and co-opted Members of the Council

Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct (the "Arrangements Document")

Staff Code of Conduct

Planning Code of Conduct

Member Officer Protocol

Policies in relation to Gifts and Hospitality

9.1.3 The Standards Committee may establish sub-committees and determine procedures for the operation of these sub-committees.

9.2 Composition

(a) Political Balance

9.2.1 The Councillor membership of the Standards Committee will comply with the political balance rules in Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

(b) Membership

9.2.2 The Standards Committee will be composed of:

- Seven Councillors, subject to each registered political group on the Council having an entitlement to at least one seat;
- At least one, and no more than three, co-opted Independent Member(s) (persons who are not a Councillor or an officer of the Council or who are not disqualified from being a Member of a Committee of the Council under Section 104 of the Local Government Act 1972)
- Each political group may nominate named substitute members and those Councillors may attend in the place of appointed Councillors provided that they have received training similar to that received by members of the Committee
- The leaders of political groups may not be members of the Standards Committee nor named substitutes (as they have a role in Stage 1 investigations)

(d) Chairing the Committee

9.2.3 The Council will appoint an Independent Member of the Committee to be its Chair.

(e) Quorum

9.2.4 The quorum of the Standards Committee shall be three Members, subject to Councillors from more than one political group being present.

9.2.5 The quorum of any sub-committee of the Committee shall be two members.

(e) Voting

9.2.6 Decisions by the Standards Committee shall be reached by a simple majority vote.

(f) Calling of Meetings

9.2.7 Meetings of the Standards Committee may be called by:

- the Head of Paid Service, or
- the Monitoring Officer, or
- the Leader of the Council, or
- the Leader of any registered political Group on the Council, or
- the Chair of the Standards Committee, or
- a petition signed by at least one fifth of the Councillors serving on the Council (ie ten Councillors)

9.2.8 The meeting will be held in public, under the access to information provisions of Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972. The press and public may be excluded from meetings only where confidential or exempt information is being considered, as defined in the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules (in part 4 of the Constitution), and subject to the passage of the necessary resolution.

9.3 Role and Function

9.3.1 The general terms of reference of the Standards Committee are to be:

1. To advise and support the Council in meeting its statutory duty of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members of the authority
2. To assist Councillors and co-opted members of the Council to observe the local Member Code of Conduct, and to promote standards of behaviour and conduct by Members which is consistent with the seven principles of public life.
3. To maintain the Arrangements Document, to oversee its effectiveness and direct the Monitoring Officer to publish amendments or revisions
4. To receive and consider reports from the Monitoring Officer made under the Council's Member complaints process, concerning allegations made about Members involving a breach of the local Member Code of Conduct, and/or other associated Council protocols, in particular the Planning code of conduct and the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations.
5. To develop the ethical framework of the Council.
6. To monitor the probity and propriety of all aspects of Council business.
7. To advise the Council on the adoption or amendment of local codes of conduct and associated protocols and to monitor their effectiveness.
8. To make recommendations to the Council on any matters or issues relating to probity, propriety and general conduct where the Panel considers it appropriate to do so in the interests of maintaining the highest standards in the carrying out of the Council's functions.
9. To refer any matter considered by the Committee for investigation by the Council's Chief Auditor (or other appropriate officer) or the Council's external auditors as it sees appropriate; the Committee may also refer any such matter to the relevant Political Group(s) for their consideration.
10. To advise, train or arrange to train Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the local Member Code of Conduct and associated local protocols;
11. To oversee the training delivered to Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives to ensure that they are able to fulfil their functions effectively;

12. To promote, oversee and monitor the register of interests of Councillors and co-opted Members of the authority, and their disclosure and declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests;
13. To grant dispensations to Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
14. To consider any other matters as the Council refers to the Committee from time to time.

The following link to the Standards Committee held on 10 October 2022 shows the changes made to this document with commentary: [Constitution of the Council May 2020 \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)