

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, 17 April 2018 at 1500 hours in Committee Room 2,
Council House, Birmingham**

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members are reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting. If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared, a Member must not speak or take part in that agenda item. Any declarations will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

Attached

**3 COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE'S LATEST
CONSULTATION: REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL
STANDARDS: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**

A copy of Stakeholder Consultation document is attached.

4 CODE OF CONDUCT

City Solicitor to update.

5 PROCEDURE IN DEALING WITH INVESTIGATION COMPLAINTS

City Solicitor to update.

6 PROPOSED DATES OF MEETINGS 2018/19

It is proposed that meetings in 2018/19 be held on the following Wednesdays:

20 June 2018 at 1400 hours
8 August 2018 at 1400 hours
10 October 2018 at 1400 hours
12 December 2018 at 1400 hours
13 February 2019 at 1400 hours
17 April 2019 at 1400 hours

7 OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that in the opinion of the Chairman are matters of urgency.

8 AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Chairman to move:-

'In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee'.

Review of Local Government Ethical Standards: Stakeholder Consultation

The Committee on Standards in Public Life is undertaking a review of local government ethical standards.

Robust standards arrangements are needed to safeguard local democracy, maintain high standards of conduct, and to protect ethical practice in local government.

As part of this review, the Committee is holding a public stakeholder consultation. The consultation is open from 12:00 on Monday 29 January 2018 and closes at 17:00 on Friday 18 May 2018.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the review are to:

1. Examine the structures, processes and practices in local government in England for:
 - a. Maintaining codes of conduct for local councillors;
 - b. Investigating alleged breaches fairly and with due process;
 - c. Enforcing codes and imposing sanctions for misconduct;
 - d. Declaring interests and managing conflicts of interest; and
 - e. Whistleblowing.
2. Assess whether the existing structures, processes and practices are conducive to high standards of conduct in local government;
3. Make any recommendations for how they can be improved; and
4. Note any evidence of intimidation of councillors, and make recommendations for any measures that could be put in place to prevent and address such intimidation.

The review will consider all levels of local government in England, including town and parish councils, principal authorities, combined authorities (including Metro Mayors) and the Greater London Authority (including the Mayor of London).

Local government ethical standards are a devolved issue. The Committee's remit does not enable it to consider ethical standards issues in devolved nations in the UK except with the agreement of the relevant devolved administrations. However, we welcome any evidence relating to local government ethical standards in the devolved nations of the UK, particularly examples of best practice, for comparative purposes.

Submissions will be published online alongside our final report, with any contact information (for example, email addresses) removed.

The Committee will publish anonymised submissions (where the name of the respondent and any references to named individuals or local authorities are removed) where a respondent makes a reasonable request to do so.

Consultation questions

The Committee invites responses to the following consultation questions.

Please note that not all questions will be relevant to all respondents and that submissions do not need to respond to every question. Respondents may wish to give evidence about only one local authority, several local authorities, or local government in England as a whole. Please do let us know whether your evidence is specific to one particular authority or is a more general comment on local government in England.

Whilst we understand submissions may be grounded in personal experience, please note that the review is not an opportunity to have specific grievances considered.

- a. Are the existing structures, processes and practices in place working to ensure high standards of conduct by local councillors? If not, please say why.
- b. What, if any, are the most significant gaps in the current ethical standards regime for local government?

Codes of conduct

- c. Are local authority adopted codes of conduct for councillors clear and easily understood? Do the codes cover an appropriate range of behaviours? What examples of good practice, including induction processes, exist?
- d. A local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that its adopted code of conduct for councillors is consistent with the Seven Principles of Public Life and that it includes appropriate provision (as decided by the local authority) for registering and declaring councillors' interests. Are these requirements appropriate as they stand? If not, please say why.

Investigations and decisions on allegations

- e. Are allegations of councillor misconduct investigated and decided fairly and with due process?
 - i. What processes do local authorities have in place for investigating and deciding upon allegations? Do these processes meet requirements for due process? Should any additional safeguards be put in place to ensure due process?
 - ii. Is the current requirement that the views of an Independent Person must be sought and taken into account before deciding on an allegation sufficient to ensure the objectivity and fairness of the decision process? Should this requirement be strengthened? If so, how?
 - iii. Monitoring Officers are often involved in the process of investigating and deciding upon code breaches. Could Monitoring Officers be subject to conflicts of interest or undue pressure when doing so? How could Monitoring Officers be protected from this risk?

Sanctions

- f. Are existing sanctions for councillor misconduct sufficient?

- i. What sanctions do local authorities use when councillors are found to have breached the code of conduct? Are these sanctions sufficient to deter breaches and, where relevant, to enforce compliance?
- ii. Should local authorities be given the ability to use additional sanctions? If so, what should these be?

Declaring interests and conflicts of interest

- g. Are existing arrangements to declare councillors' interests and manage conflicts of interest satisfactory? If not please say why.
 - i. A local councillor is under a legal duty to register any pecuniary interests (or those of their spouse or partner), and cannot participate in discussion or votes that engage a disclosable pecuniary interest, nor take any further steps in relation to that matter, although local authorities can grant dispensations under certain circumstances. Are these statutory duties appropriate as they stand?
 - ii. What arrangements do local authorities have in place to declare councillors' interests, and manage conflicts of interest that go beyond the statutory requirements? Are these satisfactory? If not, please say why.

Whistleblowing

- h. What arrangements are in place for whistleblowing, by the public, councillors, and officials? Are these satisfactory?

Improving standards

- i. What steps could *local authorities* take to improve local government ethical standards?
- j. What steps could *central government* take to improve local government ethical standards?

Intimidation of local councillors

- k. What is the nature, scale, and extent of intimidation towards local councillors?
 - i. What measures could be put in place to prevent and address this intimidation?

Who can respond?

Anyone with an interest may make a submission. The Committee welcomes submissions from members of the public.

However, the consultation is aimed particularly at the following stakeholders, both individually and corporately:

- Local authorities and standards committees;
- Local authority members (for example, Parish Councillors, District Councillors);
- Local authority officials (for example, Monitoring Officers);

- Independent Persons appointed under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011;
- Think tanks with an interest or expertise in local government;
- Academics with interest or expertise in local government; and
- Representative bodies or groups related to local government.

How to make a submission

Submissions can be sent either in electronic format or in hard copy.

Submissions must:

- State clearly who the submission is from, i.e. whether from yourself or sent on behalf of an organisation;
- Include a brief introduction about yourself/your organisation and your reason for submitting evidence;
- Be in doc, docx, rtf, txt, ooxml or odt format, not PDF;
- Be concise – we recommend no more than 2,000 words in length; and
- Contain a contact email address if you are submitting by email.

Submissions should:

- Have numbered paragraphs; and
- Comprise a single document. If there are any annexes or appendices, these should be included in the same document.

It would be helpful if your submission included any factual information you have to offer from which the Committee might be able to draw conclusions, and any recommendations for action which you would like the Committee to consider.

The Committee may choose not to accept a submission as evidence, or not to publish a submission even if it is accepted as evidence. This may occur where a submission is very long or contains material which is inappropriate.

Submissions sent to the Committee after the deadline of 17:00 on Friday 18 May 2018 may not be considered.

Submissions can be sent:

1. Via email to: public@public-standards.gov.uk
2. Via post to:
Review of Local Government Ethical Standards
Committee on Standards in Public Life
GC:07
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

If you have any questions, please contact the Committee's Secretariat by email (public@public-standards.gov.uk) or phone (0207 271 2948).



1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)

Open consultation

Local government ethical standards: stakeholder consultation

Published 29 January 2018

Last updated 6 March 2018 — see all updates

From:

Committee on Standards in Public Life (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life>)

Summary

The Committee on Standards in Public Life invites responses to its consultation to inform its review of local government ethical standards.

This consultation closes at

5pm on 18 May 2018

Consultation description

Terms of reference

The Committee on Standards in Public Life is undertaking a review of local government ethical standards.

Robust standards arrangements are needed to safeguard local democracy, maintain high standards of conduct, and to protect ethical practice in local government.

The terms of reference for the review are to:

- examine the structures, processes and practices in local government in England for:
 - maintaining codes of conduct for local councillors
 - investigating alleged breaches fairly and with due process
 - enforcing codes and imposing sanctions for misconduct
 - declaring interests and managing conflicts of interest
 - whistleblowing
- assess whether the existing structures, processes and practices are conducive to high standards of conduct in local government
- make any recommendations for how they can be improved
- note any evidence of intimidation of councillors, and make recommendations for any measures that could be put in place to prevent and address such intimidation

The review will consider all levels of local government in England, including town and parish councils, principal authorities, combined authorities (including Metro Mayors) and the Greater London Authority (including the Mayor of London).

Who can respond?

Anyone with an interest may respond to the consultation questions. The Committee welcomes submissions from members of the public.

However, the consultation is aimed particularly at the following stakeholders, both individually and corporately:

- local authorities and standards committees
- local authority members (for example, Parish Councillors, District Councillors)
- local authority officials (for example, Monitoring Officers)
- Independent Persons appointed under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011
- think tanks with an interest or expertise in local government
- academics with interest or expertise in local government
- representative bodies or groups related to local government

Further information, submission guidelines, and consultation questions can be found in the consultation document.

Documents

Local government ethical standards consultation

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685789/Local_government_ethical_standards_consultation_document.pdf)

MS Word Document, 24.9KB

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email public@public-standards.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Ways to respond

Email to:

public@public-standards.gov.uk

Write to:

Local government ethical standards review
GC.07
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Published 29 January 2018

Last updated 6 March 2018 + show all updates

1. 6 March 2018 Added Independent Persons to the list of stakeholders
2. 28 February 2018 Updated consultation document to include policy on anonymous submissions
3. 29 January 2018 First published.