
Ethics Committee

28 September 2023

Name of Cabinet Member:

N/A - Ethics Committee

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Chief Legal Officer

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title: Code of Conduct Update

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report updates the Ethics Committee on any national issues in relation to the ethical behaviour of elected Members and the local position in Coventry with regard to Code of Conduct issues.

Recommendations:

The Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the position with regard to matters concerning local authorities nationally;
and
2. Note the local position relating to the operation of the Council's Code of Conduct and to delegate any actions arising from these to the Chief Legal Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Code of Conduct Update

1. Context (or background)

1.1 The Council's Ethics Committee has agreed that the Chief Legal Officer will provide a regular update on cases relating to the Members' Code of Conduct on a national basis. This is to facilitate the Ethics Committee's role in assisting the Council with its duties under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of Member conduct.

1.2 The National Picture

1.2.1 Councillor Z, Ashfield District Council, Nottinghamshire

The leader of Ashfield District Council, Councillor Z, has been summonsed to court on charges alleging fraud by false representation (which include misuse of Council funds), five counts of money laundering, and four counts of being knowingly concerned in the fraudulent evasion of income tax.

As a result of the investigation, the Council's deputy leader, Councillor H, is also facing criminal charges under the Localism Act 2011 relating to allegedly failing to declare his disclosable pecuniary interest in a property between 30 May 2019 and 10 September 2021, as required under the act.

Both Councillors, appeared in Nottingham Magistrates' Court on 21 July 2023 and pleaded not guilty. They have been bailed and a trial date has been set for October 2023.

1.2.2 Councillor L, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Councillor L is alleged to have abused staff at a restaurant in south Wales, who called the police when he tried to leave without paying for the food he had eaten. No further action has been taken on the incident in question but Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council confirmed there is an investigation into the alleged incident.

1.3 The local picture

Complaints under the Code of Conduct

1.3.1 The Ethics Committee has requested that the Chief Legal Officer report regularly on any complaints received relating to Members of Coventry City Council.

1.3.2 The Chief Legal Officer has received one complaint since the date of the last meeting (29 June 2023) as at the date this report was written.

1.3.3 The Chief Legal Officer will update the Committee on any further complaints received before the meeting and progress on those already received.

1.3.4 All complaints are handled in accordance with the agreed Complaints Protocol. No findings have been made by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation members of Coventry City Council.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

The Ethics Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the position with regard to matters concerning local authorities nationally;
2. Note the local position relating to the operation of the Council's Code of Conduct and to delegate any actions arising from these to the Chief Legal Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

There has been no consultation as there is no proposal to implement at this stage which would require a consultation.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

Any actions arising from this report will be implemented as soon as possible.

5. Comments from Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer

5.1 Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The issues referred to in this report will assist the Council in complying with its obligations under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

6 Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan

Not applicable.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

There is no direct risk to the organisation as a result of the contents of this report.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

No direct impact at this stage

6.4 Equalities / EIA

There are no public sector equality duties which are of relevance at this stage.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None at this stage

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

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Finance: Graham Clark	Lead Accountant	Finance	11/09/23	12/09/23
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