
Ethics Committee
Council

26 June 2025
2 September 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:
N/A - Ethics Committee

Director Approving Submission of the report:
Director of Law and Governance

Ward(s) affected:
None

Title: Annual Report of Ethics Committee 2024-25

Is this a key decision?
No

Executive Summary

This report forms the ninth annual report of the Ethics Committee, setting out the work of the Committee over the last municipal year. In particular, it reports on:

- Local Code of Corporate Governance
- Ending Abuse in Public Life - Council's Self Assessment and Toolkit
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report

The report also details other, regular work of the Committee over the last year and sets out a brief overview of work to be undertaken in the 2025/26 municipal year. The Committee is asked to approve the report and recommend to Council that it notes the report and considers whether there is any work that it would wish the Committee to undertake.

Recommendations:

The Ethics Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Annual Report of the Committee; and
- (2) Recommend that Council notes the Annual Report and considers whether there is any work within the Committee's terms of reference that Council would wish the Committee to undertake.

Council is recommended to:

- (1) Note the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee; and
- (2) Consider whether there is any work within the Committee's terms of reference that Council would wish the Committee to undertake.

List of Appendices included:

None.

Other useful background papers can be found at the following web addresses:

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?

Yes – 2 September 2025

Report title: Annual Report of Ethics Committee 2024/25

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1** The Council's Ethics Committee was established in 2012 following the introduction of new duties and responsibilities regarding ethical conduct in the Localism Act 2011. The Council as a whole has a legal duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted Members of the authority. The Ethics Committee, through its work, assists in discharging this statutory duty.
- 1.2** The terms of reference of Ethics Committee also include:
- (a) Making recommendations to the Council on the appointment of “independent persons” under the Localism Act 2011;
 - (b) Approving and revising the Complaints Protocol which will set out the detailed procedures for considering complaints made against Elected and Co-opted Members under the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members;
 - (c) Considering complaints made against Elected and Co-opted Members under the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members in accordance with Complaints Protocol;
 - (d) Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members and making appropriate recommendations to the relevant body;
 - (e) At the request of the Member or Co-opted Member concerned, reviewing any decision of the Monitoring Officer not to grant a dispensation in relation to disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011;
 - (f) Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct for Employees and making appropriate recommendations to the relevant body;
 - (g) Considering complaints made against Elected Members of Finham Parish Council, Keresley Parish Council and Allesley Parish Council under the relevant Parish Council's Code of Conduct for Elected Members in accordance with the City Council's Complaints Protocol; and
 - (h) Considering any other matters which are relevant to the ethical governance of the Council, its Members or Employees.
- 1.3** The Committee approves a work programme for each year which includes regular reports as well as one off pieces of work. At its meeting in March 2017, the Committee agreed that in future it would submit an annual report to Council setting out the work that it has accomplished in the past year. This report comprises the eighth Annual Report of the Ethics Committee.

2. The Annual Report and Recommended Proposal

2.1 About the Committee

In the municipal year 2024/25 Ethics Committee comprised five Councillors. The membership of the Committee was Cllr S Nazir (Chair), Cllr N Akhtar (from September 2024), Cllr L Bigham, Cllr P Hetherton, and Cllr E Reeves. Former Cllr D Welsh was a Member until his resignation as a Councillor in August 2024. It is regrettable that Members of the Conservative Group decided not to take up their allocated place and be a part of the Committee. There were three named substitutes, Cllrs S Gray, G Lloyd and P Seaman. Although not Members of the Committee, the three Independent Persons appointed by the Council are encouraged to attend the meetings where possible. The Independent Persons for 2024/25 are Steve Atkinson, Ruth Wills and Peter Wiseman. The Committee held four scheduled meetings in 2024/25 (in June 2024, September 2025, January 2025 and March 2025).

2.2 Code of Conduct Complaints

The Council received a total of 17 complaints new formal complaints against Councillors in the municipal year 2024/25 which can be broken down as follows:

7 complaints were dealt with informally

9 complaints were concluded at Stage 1

1 complaint was concluded at Stage 2

2.3 Local Code of Corporate Governance

The Committee considered the Local Code of Corporate Governance which contains provisions to ensure the Council is implementing the principles of good governance. The Code was adopted in 2017 and as a means of best practice is reviewed annually to ensure it has been updated to reflect the ways in which the Council operates. The Committee noted the Council's effectiveness of and/or compliance with the Council's governance arrangements.

2.4 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report

The Committee noted the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report which provided details of the number of complaints received by the Council, trends and outcomes of the Council's performance in comparison to other local authorities and previous years. Where a case of maladministration is found, this would be formally reported to the Committee.

2.5 Ending Abuse in Public Life – Council's Self Assessment and Toolkit

The Local Government Association (LGA) produced a toolkit with the aim of helping local authorities in tackling and mitigating the impact and risks of abuse and intimidation that councillors may encounter as part of their role, supporting

them to be safe. This resource which is part of LGA's 'Debate Not Hate' campaign is structured around 5 principles and aims to offer a practical approach to implementing each principle.

LGA recommended that local councils undertake an evidence gathering exercise prior to using the toolkit, in order to assess their current position. Upon considering the report in September 2024, the Committee also discussed the how the process would work and the way in which the Council and police would work together to protect Councillors.

- **Outcome of the evidence gathering exercise**

At the following meeting (January 2025) the Committee further considered the Self Assessment Toolkit. An initial assessment of the toolkit was carried out and a forward plan was created to provide a starting point for the Council. Following the initial assessment, it was established that obtaining feedback from Councillors would be next step.

The Committee considered the work already undertaken which complements the work on the campaign including the support offered through the Council's Occupational Health Service and personal safety awareness training sessions available for Councillors.

The Committee welcomed LGA's work on the campaign and self assessment toolkit and endorsed the initial self-assessment and the Council's subsequent forward plan.

At its March 2025 meeting, the Committee received an update on the progress of the Self Assessment Toolkit and further discussed how the collaborative approach with the police will work in practice including how Operation Ford – the programme to increase the support for elected Members – can be used to bridge the gap where the threshold for police action is not met.

2.6 Other Work

The Committee received an update on Members training during 2024/25 and supported the continuing delivery of Members Training and Development Strategy.

2.7 Work Programme for 2025/26

In addition to regular reports on Code of Conduct complaints, updates from the Monitoring Officer, and Officer and Member gifts and hospitality this year, among other things, the Committee will look at work in the following:

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report.

The Committee will also maintain a watching brief on any legislative changes arising from the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report and recommendations of January 2019

2.8 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:-

- (1) Approve the Annual Report of the Committee; and
- (2) Recommend that Council notes the Annual Report and to consider whether there is any work within the Committee's terms of reference that Council would wish the Committee to undertake.

Council is recommended to:

- (1) Note the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee; and
- (2) Consider whether there is any work within the Committee's terms of reference that Council would wish the Committee to undertake.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1** 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

Not applicable.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

None.

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.

Contributor/approver name	Title	Service Area	Date document sent out	Date response received or approved
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Finance: Richard Shirley	Lead Accountant	Finance	02/06/2025	02/06/2025
Legal: Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	Law and Governance	02/06/2025	06/06/2025
Councillor S Nazir	Chair of Ethics Committee		12/06/2025	13/06/2025

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