

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Ethics Committee held at 11.00 am on Thursday, 19
March 2026

Present:

Members: Councillor S Nazir (Chair)

Councillor J Gardiner
Councillor S Gray (substitute for Councillor E Reeves)
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor G Lloyd (substitute for Councillor L Bigham)
Councillor M Mutton (substitute for Councillor N Akhtar)

Independent persons: S Atkinson, R Wills, P Wiseman

Employees (by Directorate):

Law, Governance and Safer Communities J Newman (Director), S Bennett, G Holmes, S Manhertz

Apologies: Councillors N Akhtar, L Bigham and E Reeves

Public Business

24. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

25. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December, 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

26. Elected Members Training and Development Strategy 2026-30

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities, (which would also be considered by the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities on 23 March, 2026 and Council on 24 March, 2026), appended to which was the proposed Elected Members Training and Development Strategy 2026-2030.

The report indicated that the role of an Elected Member is ever changing as demands from residents and Council policy and services evolve over time. In addition, there are legislative changes and requirements (for example in relation to planning) that need to be taken in account. Therefore, to be able to ensure that the Elected Members Training and Development Strategy is relevant to those demands and changes it is considered necessary to review and refresh the Strategy which had been in place since 2022.

The timing of this refresh means that all current Elected Members will have served their term of office under the previous Strategy, so are able to contribute to the review of that Strategy through a process of surveys and via the Members Training and Development Cabinet Member Advisory Panel. The proposed refreshed Strategy was found at Appendix A to the report.

The Strategy covers:

- Purpose of the Strategy
- Assessing Need and Requesting Training
- Training Matrix
- Governance and Delivery
- Appendix 1 – Example Training Matrix
- Appendix 2 – Revised Terms of Reference for Elected Members Training and Development Advisory Panel

To support the refresh of the Strategy, the survey undertaken in 2019 was repeated to provide a comparison on how training is viewed by Elected Members compared to before there was a strategy in place. There has been an increase in support for a core training programme for all Elected Members (94.4% in 2026 compared to 83.3% in 2019).

There has also been improved communication about training. 94% receive information from Internal Communication compared to 78% in 2019. Also, in 2019 28% of respondents said they received no information about training. In 2026 this was 0%.

The report indicated that Elected Members feel the Council is better meeting their training needs. 89% feel the Council is meeting their training needs “A lot” or “A Moderate amount” compared to 62.5% in 2019. Also, in 2019 12.5% said the Council wasn’t meeting their needs at all. In 2026 this was 0%. More information on the results was detailed in Appendix B to the report.

As well as being based on more recent Elected Member feedback, the updated Strategy reflects the changes in how the Strategy is administered by Governance Services, as well identifying a process to assess the added value of one-off training requests that have a cost associated with it. It is proposed that this will be assessed by the Monitoring Office in consultation with the Chair of the Member Training and Development Cabinet Member Advisory Panel.

In reviewing the Strategy, it was considered that the terms of reference for the Member Training and Development Cabinet Member Advisory Panel should also be reviewed to ensure that they reflect the way in which the delivery of the Strategy has evolved over time. The membership of the Advisory Panel is cross-party, chaired by a representative from the controlling Group, and also invites newly elected Members to attend as observers. The terms of reference have been amended to include a requirement to submit an annual report to the Ethics Committee who have taken an interest in Elected Member training and have requested regular reports on delivery of the Strategy, including receiving an update of the core training requirements. The amended terms of reference were included in Appendix 2 of the Strategy.

In order to ensure that a wide range of training and development is offered to Elected Members, a training matrix will be developed and endorsed by the Members Training and Development Advisory Panel. The training matrix will be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure it meets Elected Members' training needs. The training matrix will provide a programme of core training which all Elected Members will be required to complete throughout their term of office. In addition to this there will be role specific core training for those Elected Members with special responsibilities, or who sit on specific Committees. An example of the training matrix was included in Appendix 1 of the Strategy document.

Core training for all Elected Members will include:

- Code of Conduct
- Induction programme for newly elected Members
- Personal Safety
- Equalities
- Data Protection and Cyber Security
- Health and Safety

Elected Members appointed to Planning Committee and Licensing and Regulatory Committee will also be required to complete training to sit on those Committees in accordance with the Constitution.

There will also be a programme of regular in-house supplementary training, identified by regular training needs analysis through consultation with Elected Members. This will be organised and arranged, but not necessarily delivered, internally by Council officers. In addition to an in-house programme, Elected Members may request to attend ad hoc one-off training requests delivered by external organisations, such as the Local Government Association (LGA). A training request pro-forma will be developed and managed by Governance Services. There will be a budget allocated to enable one-off requests.

Elected Members will also be able to request additional training, where several Elected Members have identified that a greater understanding of an issue is required and is not covered by the current offer. This will enable the training and development programme to be responsive and flexible to Elected Members training needs. The training strategy provides a framework in which there is flexibility to offer a variety of training methods as well as insight from Members directly through surveys as well as strategic oversight from the Members Advisory Panel.

The Committee welcomed the updated Strategy and thanked officers for all the work undertaken in this regard. Officers were particularly commended for providing flexibility in the delivery of the training, thus ensuring that it is accessible for everyone.

RESOLVED that the Ethics Committee:-

- 1) Supports the refreshed Elected Members Training and Development Strategy as appended to the report.**
- 2) Agrees to receive an Annual Report on delivery of the Strategy as well as any progress reports as requested.**

27. **Six Monthly Review of Members' Gifts and Hospitality**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities which provided a six-month review of the Members' Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality Register for the period 1 July to 31 December, 2025.

The Committee welcomed that Register had been updated to provide more information on any benefits to the Council and considered ways of reviewing and evaluating the Gifts and Hospitality Policy for both Members and Officers (Minute 28 below also refers)

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- 1) **Notes the Members' Gifts and Hospitality Register entries from 1 July to 31 December , 2025.**
- 2) **Requests that the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities undertakes a four yearly review of the Gifts and Hospitality Policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose.**

28. **Six Monthly Review of Officers' Gifts and Hospitality**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities which provided a six-month review of Officers' Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality Register for the period 1 July to 31 December, 2025.

The Committee welcomed that the Register had been updated to provide more information on any benefits to the Council and considered ways of reviewing and evaluating the Gifts and Hospitality Policy for both Members and Officers (Minute 27 above also refers).

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- 1) **Notes the Officers' Gifts and Hospitality Register entries from 1 July to 31 December, 2025.**
- 2) **Requests that the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities undertakes a four yearly review of the Gifts and Hospitality Policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose.**

29. **Code of Conduct Update**

The Ethics Committee considered a report of the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities which provided an update on national issues in relation to the ethical behaviour of Elected Members and the local position in Coventry regarding the Code of Conduct.

In relation to a Code of Conduct investigation and outcome into the use of a Whatsapp Group by a number of Tameside Councillors, the Committee sought and received assurances that training on the use of Whatsapp and other social

media tools would be included in the training programme for Elected Members (Minute 26 above refers)

The Committee also noted the position in relation to the local parish Councils and their Code of Conduct. It was noted that it was proposed that future reports would separate out complaints in relation to Coventry City Councillors and local parish Councillors.

RESOLVED that the Ethics Committee:-

- 1) **Notes the position with regard to matters concerning local authorities nationally.**
- 2) **Welcomes the assurances received in relation to the training to be provided to Elected Members.**
- 3) **Notes that future reports will identify complaints received in relation to Coventry City Councillors and local parish Councillors separately.**
- 2) **Notes the local position relating to the operation of the Council's Code of Conduct and delegates any actions arising from these to the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities, following consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee.**

30. Work Programme for the Ethics Committee 2026/27

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities which outlined the proposed Work Programme for the Ethics Committee for the Municipal Year 2026/27. The proposed Work Programme was appended to the report.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the Work Programme for 2026/27 as appended to the report with the inclusion of an update at the first meeting of the new Municipal year on the outcome of the Government Consultation on the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities.

31. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.45am)