

Ethics Committee
Council

25 June 2026
TBC

Name of Cabinet Member:
N/A - Ethics Committee

Director Approving Submission of the report:
Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities

Ward(s) affected:
None

Title: Annual Report of Ethics Committee 2025-26

Is this a key decision?
No

Executive Summary

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

- Code of Conduct Complaints
- Local Code of Corporate Governance
- Ending Abuse in Public Life – Council’s Self-Assessment Toolkit
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report
- Preparations for Candidates in the May 2026 Municipal Elections

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 2026/27 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 – Date tbc

Report title: Annual Report of Ethics Committee 2025/26

1. Context (or background)

1.1 Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council has a duty to:

- Promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its Members and co-opted members; and
- When discharging its duty, adopt a voluntary code dealing with the conduct that is expected of Members and co-opted Member of the authority when they are acting in their capacity as Members (that is, in an official capacity).

1.2 Section 28(6) of the Localism Act 2011 also requires a relevant authority to have arrangements in place to deal with complaints that its Members' code of conduct has been breached, including arrangements for:

- Complaints to be investigated.
- Decisions on allegations to be made.

1.3 The Council's Ethics Committee was established in 2012 following the introduction of the 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.

1.4 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.

1.5 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 tenth Annual Report of the Ethics Committee.

2. The Annual Report and Recommended Proposal

2.1 About the Committee

In the municipal year 2025/26 Ethics Committee comprised 6 Councillors. The membership of the Committee was Cllr S Nazir (Chair), Cllr N Akhtar, Cllr L Bigham, Cllr J Gardiner, Cllr P Hetherington, Cllr E M Reeves. There were 3 named substitutes: Cllr S Gray; Cllr G Lloyd; Cllr M Mutton. It is regrettable that Members of the Conservative Group decided not to take up their allocated place and be a part of the Committee. The Independent Persons were Steven Atkinson, Ruth Wills and Peter Wiseman. The Committee held 4 scheduled meetings in 2025/26 (in June 2025, September 2025, January 2026 and March 2026).

2.2 Code of Conduct Complaints

All Members and Co-opted Members agree to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct upon their election.

The Council received a total of 10 new complaints against 13 Councillors in the municipal year 2025/26. Out of the 10 complaints received by the Monitoring Officer, 1 related to Finham Parish Council, 1 related to Allesley Parish Council and the remaining 8 related to Members of the City Council.

The Finham Parish Council complaint was made about 2 Councillors. It was escalated to Stage 2, upon which it was not upheld.

The Allesley Parish Council complaint was in relation to 2 Councillors and was dealt with at Stage 1 with no further action recommended

For the City Council, one complaint could not be investigated as the Councillor was not acting in their capacity as a Councillor, in the circumstances which gave rise to the complaint.

There were 2 complaints which were concluded at Stage 1 after each being reviewed by an Independent Person after which it was determined that there was no breach of the Code and 1 where no further action was taken.

4 complaints remain at Stage 1.

None of these complaints were Councillor on Councillor.

2.3 Local Code of Corporate Governance

The Local Code of Corporate Governance sets out the way in which the City Council will satisfy the principles of good governance. It details the City Council's action plan for achieving these principles. The development of the Local Code is upon recommendation by CIPFA/Solace Framework to Local Authorities to maintain a Local Code to assist in achieving good governance.

The Local Code was first introduced in 2017 and is reviewed regularly as a means of best practice. It is considered by the Audit and Procurement Committee. It was updated in 2025 and considered by the Ethics Committee in the September of that year, where the legal requirement to undertake an annual review was noted.

2.4 Update on the Local Government Association Ending Abuse in Public Life – Council's Self Assessment and Tool kit

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.

The Committee has regularly received progress updates on the work being undertaken including the most recent update in March 2025. Since then, efforts have continued to support Councillors. The Committee were informed of changes and work in progress including training on personal safety and awareness, links and signposting on the intranet for advice and the plans to provide a Councillor-led approach to delivering the actions and outcomes identified in the self-assessment to further aid progress and the creation of a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. The Committee noted the progress undertaken by the LGA and supported the proposed approach.

2.5 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report

In January 2026, the Committee considered the Complaints to the Local Government and Social Ombudsman (LGSCO) report for the year 2024/25. With the LGSCO being the final stage for Local Authority complaints, it issues an annual letter which sets out information regarding complaints received concerning the Local Authority such as the number of complaints and any patterns of complaints.

2.6 Preparations for Candidates in the May 2026 Municipal Elections

A report on Prospective Councillor Information was considered by the Committee which sought to address the concerns previously raised by the Committee regarding newly elected Councillors and the extent to which they understand and are prepared for their role before standing.

The Committee heard about the work being undertaken by officers to support new Councillors including an induction, training and the publishing of a 'Becoming a Councillor' booklet.

In March 2026, upon consideration of the report, the Committee made suggestions regarding the booklet including a list of useful skills, a glossary, information of the potential time commitment required and the variety of ways in which ward duties can be undertaken. Although the booklet had already been produced, the suggestions were able to be considered for use on the City Council's website or incorporated into candidate briefing sessions

2.7 Other Work

The Committee received updates on Members Training and Development Review 2025/26. The Elected Members Training and Development Strategy was refreshed during 2026 and the final version of the strategy was considered by Ethics committee ahead of Council on 24th March 2026. The terms of reference were amended to include an Annual Report on Elected Members training to Ethics Committee, in addition to any other information requested. The Committee also regularly monitored the Ethics Committee Work Programme throughout the year.

2.8 Work Programme for 2026/27

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:

- Update on the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities
- Local Code of Corporate Governance
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report
- Review of work on the New Member Induction Programme and Prospective Councillor Information

The Committee will also maintain a watching brief on any legislative changes arising from the Ethics and Integrity Commission and any recommendations.

2.9 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:

- 3) Note the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee; and
- 4) 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, Governance and Safer Communities

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 (duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct) and section 28 (codes of conduct) 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

6.4.1 The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act;
- b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.4.2 The Code of Conduct and the Council's arrangements adhere with national guidance and fully comply with the public-sector equality duty.

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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