
Ethics Committee

24 September 2026

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: Code of Conduct Update

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary

The 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 matter 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 Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities, following consultation with the Chair of 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 Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities 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 Members' conduct.

1.2 The National Picture

1.2.1 Local Government Association Guidance on Social Media

The Local Government Association (LGA) has produced guidance for Councillors in respect of social media.

The guidance is designed to assist Councils in advising Councillors on the effective, safe and responsible use of social media, highlighting legal considerations, defamation and libel, reputational impact, and safety considerations including securing accounts and privacy. It also confirms that "the same legal standards apply online as offline".

It aims to " maximise positive engagement opportunities while minimising the risk of legal issues and reputational damage to both individual councillors and the council".

The guidance can be adopted informally, as local policy or embedded into the Constitution and link to the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

1.2.2 Councillor W; Rother District Council

Following an independent investigation, which found evidence of breaches of the Rother District Council's Members' Code of Conduct by Councillor W, the matter was handled by way of a local resolution.

Councillor W was said to have made comments at a Council meeting in July 2025 and made subsequent comments on social media about "the Council's decision-making process" and the recording that decision.

The Standards Committee was not asked to determine whether a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members had arisen, but it is the Council's policy that where a complaint is resolved by local resolution it must be reported its Standards Committee. However, should Councillor W fail to comply with the resolution in the manner agreed, the Monitoring Officer would be able to consider further action.

The agreed local resolution included written apologies, training on Members' Code of Conduct, Member-Officer relations and the use of social media, a future conduct undertaking and a public-facing personal statement.

As part of the public-facing personal statement written by Councillor W, he acknowledged the findings of the investigation, apologised and explained that he would "raise any future procedural concerns through appropriate Council channels".

1.2.3 Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption

The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption also known as GRECO at the framework and measures in place for preventing corruption and promoting integrity at national level and subnational level via the Greater London Authority and Kent County Council.

As part of its findings, it found that the in respect of its Anti-corruption and integrity framework, the UK has "has a robust anti-corruption and integrity policy framework, both at the national level and in the local authorities under evaluation".

GRECO made six recommendations for the UK , those being to:

- Clarify and strengthen the framework for sanctioning elected officials in local authorities to ensure effectiveness and proportionality
- Implement measures to raise awareness on matters of integrity for Councillors through regular training (for Kent County Council authorities)
- Provide advice on integrity, conflicts of interest and corruption prevention and confidential counselling for employees
- (For Kent County Council authorities) Make it a legal requirement to publish gifts and hospitality, when none are received that this is expressly referred to on the website and consider published an aggregated list of when received by Councillor.
- Ensure there is greater transparency in respect of lobbying
- Bring the Local Audit Office into operation so to allow for the escalation of issues, financial transparency and timely publication of audited accounts in an effective manner.

1.2.4 Councillor M; Slough Borough Council

The Standards Committee at Slough Borough Council determined that Councillor M had breached the Local Authority's Code of Conduct

following a complaint of “intrusive and aggressive” conduct at an establishment in 2025.

The complaint, as set out in the Standards Committee’s Decision Notice details how in April and September of last year, Councillor M without prior notice “approached individuals working at the business in an intrusive and aggressive manner”.

It was said that in April 2025 among other things, the Councillor made threats which indicated that the business could be closed down and had “deeply intimidating” tone and conduct causing an individual to feel harassed.

Furthermore, In September 2025 he is said to have left his vehicle in a position which blocked the road and attempted “to solicit the assistance of a passerby in a manner that continued a pattern of harassing, targeted and vexatious behaviour and placed an unsustainable burden on a small business navigating a challenging environment”.

As a result of this conduct, Councillor M was found to have breached paragraphs of the Code pertaining to treating others with respect, bullying and harassment and improper use of position.

The sanctions recommended by the Committee concerning Councillor M were censure, training on the role of a Councillor and the offer of conciliation which, if accepted by the business, for Councillor to engage with the process.

1.2.5 Durham County Council Councillor emails

The Chief Executive of Durham County Council is reported by the BBC to have issued a warning to Councillors regarding emails being sent considered to be “unacceptable”.

Although the specific details of the emails themselves do not appear to have been disclosed, these are reported to concern "personal views, allegations and assumptions" and include instances of “officers being singled out” and “allegations being presented as fact without any evidential basis”.

The Chief Executive is also reported to have commented on the "potentially significant legal risks" which the Local Authority could face as a consequence of such emails, such as employment tribunal claims and highlighted Councillors’ responsibilities regarding “high standards of behaviour” and “respect”.

1.3 The Local Picture

Complaints under the Code of Conduct:

- 1.3.1 The Ethics Committee has requested that the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities reports regularly on any complaints received relating to Members of Coventry City Council.

Since the last Committee meeting held in June 2026, the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities has received 4 complaints concerning 2 Councillors.

All complaints concern Councillors of the City Council. 2 of these complaints are Councillor on Councillor. At the time of writing this report the complaints remain at Stage 1.

2. Recommended proposal

The Ethics Committee are 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 Council's Code of Conduct and to delegate any actions arising from these to the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities, in consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

Not applicable.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

Not applicable.

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

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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