

COUNCIL
16 MAY 2019**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(d) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE STANDARDS
AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**Local Government Ethical Standards – Report of the National Committee on
Standards in Public Life**

1. The National Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) assessed whether the existing structures, processes and practices are conducive to high standards of conduct in local government. Members will recall that representatives of the Nolan Committee visited the Council in September 2018 as part of its information gathering exercise and evidence of good practice relating to member conduct in local government – the Council was the only county council visited. Following the visit, the Nolan Committee was kind enough to write to say its delegation was impressed by the leadership demonstrated by senior officers and members of the Council, and the Chairman of this Committee was invited to attend the formal launch of the report at the end of January 2019. The Nolan report makes recommendations for improvement, to government in relation to the legislative regime, and best practice recommendations to local government for consideration.
2. The highlight recommendations are that authorities should regain the power to suspend members (for up to 6 months) as a sanction for breaching the Code; the criminal offences in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished but the classes of registrable interests broadened; a register of gifts and hospitality be re-established; and independent members of standards committees should be allowed to vote.
3. Local government will have to await the Government's response to legislative recommendations. This Committee has noted the report published by the Nolan Committee following its review of standards in local government and the various recommendations to Government concerning legislative change.
4. The Nolan Committee has issued a series of Best Practice recommendations and this Committee was asked for any initial views on what action should be taken in relation to them. This Committee reinforced its support for a pan-Worcestershire Code and noted that the Council already complied with many of the Best Practice recommendations.
5. Additionally, this Committee supported in principle an extension of the Code to expressly cover prohibition of both bullying and harassment, and that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services discuss and try to agree a definition with the other principal authorities. It has also agreed that the Head of Legal and Democratic

Services would discuss with the other principal authorities in the county the further Nolan recommendations on Codes of Conduct requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation, and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors. The Committee has supported in principle that a Register of Gifts and Hospitality could be established ahead of any legislation, to be discussed with the other authorities.

6. This Committee has noted that the Monitoring Officer, having regard to those initial views, will be discussing any implications for the pan-Worcestershire Code of Conduct with the other principal authorities in the county and a further report would be received following those discussions.

Code of Conduct – Complaints Update

7. Since the last report to the Committee in October 2018, the Council has received one formal complaint that a County Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct for members. The Committee received a summary of the details of the formal complaint and has noted that no further action was necessary.

Mr S Mackay
Chairman

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 10 April 2019.