

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL  
STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

6 September 2024

**Local Ethical Framework Developments**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Members on the development of the national ethical framework under the Localism Act 2011.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Members receive a report at each ordinary Standards and Governance Committee meeting setting out any recent developments in the national ethical framework.

**3.0 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE – “SETTING THE STANDARD”**

- 3.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) has published an entry on its blog titled ‘Setting the Standard’ - [Setting the Standard – Committee on Standards in Public Life \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2024/08/22/setting-the-standard-committee-on-standards-in-public-life/).
- 3.2 In the blog, the importance of ‘service’ in holding public office, and the need to take decisions in the wider public interest, is emphasised. The CSPL states that the General Principles of Conduct have stood the test of time and are the ‘bedrock’ of the standards regime.
- 3.3 The CSPL acknowledges that the standards landscape is complex and there is unfinished business in relation to addressing major risks to standards.

**4.0 CSPL – ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024**

- 4.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life has published its Annual Report for 2023-2024 - [Annual Report 2023 - 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/annual-report-2023-2024.pdf).
- 4.2 In the report, the CSPL advises on arrangements for upholding ethical standards of conduct across public life and describes the work it has carried out over the past year, including:
- the appointment of a new Chair in December 2023;
  - maintaining its watching brief on standards across public life;
  - championing its 2023 Leading in Practice report;
  - holding a seminar on lobbying exploring how current lobbying rules are working in practice, particularly in respect of governance and transparency arrangements;
  - following up the CSPL’s 2020 AI and public standards report with a seminar.
- 4.3 The CSPL hopes to continue its evidence-based review work; maintaining strong relationships with those delivering the standards landscape, including within the Devolved Administrations; and engaging widely to promote the Nolan principles.

## **5.0 CSPL – “ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN PUBLIC BODIES”**

- 5.1 The Standards and Governance Committee has previously been briefed regarding the CSPL’s review of accountability within public bodies and the importance of acting on early warning signs - [Committee on Standards in Public Life launches new review on accountability within public bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/committee-on-standards-in-public-life-launches-new-review-on-accountability-within-public-bodies).
- 5.2 The full terms of reference for the review and further details are published online here - [Accountability within Public Bodies: terms of reference - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accountability-within-public-bodies-terms-of-reference), along with Frequently Asked Questions regarding the terms of reference ([2024-03-21 Accountability within public bodies - terms of reference FAQ final \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/2024-03-21-accountability-within-public-bodies-terms-of-reference-faq-final)).
- 5.3 As part of its review, the CSPL held an open consultation as part of its evidence gathering and published a call for evidence on its website - [Accountability within Public Bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/accountability-within-public-bodies). The consultation closed on 14 June 2024.
- 5.4 CIPFA has responded to the consultation, making a series of recommendations, details of which are published here - [Boost local government accountability through governance, ethical, and risk management improvements: CIPFA \(localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk\)](https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/news/boost-local-government-accountability-through-governance-ethical-and-risk-management-improvements-cipfa).
- 5.5 The National Association for Local Councils (NALC) has also responded to the consultation and details can be found here - [Standards regime needs more “teeth”, town and parish councils say \(localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk\)](https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/news/standards-regime-needs-more-teeth-town-and-parish-councils-say).
- 5.6 It is anticipated that a report detailing best practice for public sector organisations will be published in Spring 2025.

## **6.0 SECURITY FOR COUNCILLORS**

- 6.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) has published presentations from its event on 10 July 2024 regarding “Personal Safety for newly elected councillors”, which Members may find helpful - [Personal safety for newly-elected councillors, 10 July 2024 | Local Government Association](https://www.localgovernmentassociation.org.uk/news/personal-safety-for-newly-elected-councillors-10-july-2024).
- 6.2 It has also published presentations from its event on 23 July 2024 regarding “Handling online abuse and intimidation for newly-elected councillors” - [Handling online abuse and intimidation for newly-elected councillors, 23 July 2024 | Local Government Association](https://www.localgovernmentassociation.org.uk/news/handling-online-abuse-and-intimidation-for-newly-elected-councillors-23-july-2024).
- 6.3 The LGA has previously published its report “Debate Not Hate: Ending abuse in public life for councillors” outlining “how councils can better support councillors to prevent and handle abuse and includes principles for councils to consider, top tips and good practice case studies.” - [Debate Not Hate: Ending abuse in public life for councillors | Local Government Association](https://www.localgovernmentassociation.org.uk/news/debate-not-hate-ending-abuse-in-public-life-for-councillors).

## **7.0 NEW CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATUTORY OFFICERS**

- 7.1 In July, Lawyers in Local Government (LLG), the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) published a Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers (the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Finance Officer/section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer).
- 7.2 The Code is published here – [Code-of-Practice-on-Good-Governance-for-Statutory-Officers-June-2024.pdf \(solace.org.uk\)](https://www.solace.org.uk/media/1234567/code-of-practice-on-good-governance-for-statutory-officers-june-2024.pdf).

7.3 The Code sets out seven Standards of the Golden Triangle, under which further requirements are set out:

1. Understand Governance: Roles and responsibilities
2. Act Wisely: A duty of enquiry & the exercise of statutory functions
3. Lead Ethically: The Seven Principles of Public Life
4. Act Effectively: Robustness in working arrangements
5. Resource the Roles: Get the tools to do the job
6. Build Resilience: Deputies and development
7. Deliver sound decision making: The outcome of good governance

## **8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no significant financial implications arising from this report.

## **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The legal implications are set out in the body of this report.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL/CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no significant environmental implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no significant equalities implications arising from this report.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

12.1 That the Committee notes the contents of this report.

BARRY KHAN

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### Background Papers:

The Localism Act 2011

North Yorkshire Council's Code of Conduct for Members

County Hall  
NORTHALLERTON

21 August 2024