

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL  
STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

13 March 2026

**Local Ethical Framework Developments**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Members on developments in 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 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS REGIME**

- 3.1 The Committee was briefed at its last meeting in February regarding the Government's response to the consultation - [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#) with the Government intending to "legislate for a whole system reform of the current regime as set out in Localism Act 2011" when parliamentary time permits.

- 3.2 There is no further update on this matter yet. Members will be kept informed of developments.

**4.0 THE ETHICS AND INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

- 4.1 The Committee has previously been briefed regarding the intended establishment of a new Ethics and Integrity Commission, to oversee the ethical standards of ministers and public officials and "drive up standards in public life", change the ministerial severance arrangements and the business appointment rules.
- 4.2 The Commission was officially launched in October last year and the Committee on Standards in Public Life is now subsumed into the Commission.
- 4.3 The Commission will also have a role regarding the proposed public body professional duty of candour for staff which is anticipated will be set out in a code of ethics based on the general principles of public life.
- 4.4 A letter from the Prime Minister to the Chair of the Commission regarding the Commission's work is published online - [Letter from the Prime Minister | Ethics and Integrity Commission](#).
- 4.5 The Chair of the Commission's comments on the Government response to the 'Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England' consultation are published online - [Chair's statement on the government response to 'Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England' consultation. | Ethics and Integrity Commission](#)

- 4.6 The Commission has stated that it will review the public sector ombudsman system, with further information about the review to be published this month. The Chair of the Commission has written to the Prime Minister to set out the early work intended to be undertaken by the Commission - [EIC progress – Letter to Prime Minister | Ethics and Integrity Commission](#).
- 4.7 Further information about the work of the Commission is published on its website - [Ethics and Integrity Commission | The Ethics and Integrity Commission promotes the highest standards in public life, reports to the Prime Minister on matters concerning ethical standards, and advises public authorities on the development of clear codes of conduct with effective oversight arrangements](#).
- 4.8 Members will be briefed regarding future work of the Commission.

## **5.0 CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE**

- 5.1 In October 2025, the UK's local government associations agreed a joint statement in support of the Civility in Public Life Programme. Information about the Civility in Public Life programme has previously been presented to the Committee and is published online - [Civility in public life | Local Government Association](#).
- 5.2 The joint statement is published online - [UK local government associations: Joint statement on Civility in Public Life | Local Government Association](#) – with the organisations stating that they are "increasingly troubled by threats and violence against councillors and officers".

## **6.0 BETTER MENTAL HEALTH FOR COUNCILLORS: LOOKING AFTER YOUR WELLBEING**

- 6.1 The LGA has published presentations regarding the 'Better mental health for councillors: Looking after your wellbeing' event held on 24 September 2025. The presentations can be found online - [Better mental health for councillors: Looking after your wellbeing, 24 September 2025 | Local Government Association](#).

## **7.0 INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE**

- 7.1 The LGA has published presentations regarding:
- a) "Handling online abuse and intimidation for councillors" from its event on 11 December 2025. The slides are published here - [Handling online abuse and intimidation for councillors, 11 December 2025 | Local Government Association](#);
  - b) "Personal safety for councillors" from its event on 12 February 2026. The slides are published here - [Personal safety for councillors, 12 February 2026 | Local Government Association](#)

## **NYC Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety**

- 7.2 North Yorkshire Council takes Member safety seriously. The Council's cross party Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety was established in May 2024 and has met 8 times to date, next due to meet on 5 March 2026. It is supported by the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer and the Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny and is also attended by the Head of Health and Safety and two North Yorkshire Police Officers.

7.3 The Group has undertaken a number of practical steps to promote Member safety, including:

- Consideration of the Local Government Association's 'Debate Not Hate' campaign and supporting toolkit action points and work undertaken by other authorities to promote councillor safety, to provide a framework against which progress locally can be assessed; and an audit of the Council's approach to supporting councillors has been undertaken, based upon key aspects of the toolkit;
- An all-councillor survey on member safety completed and the results analysed and responded to in November/December 2024. This is to be repeated on an annual basis;
- A system for the reporting, collation and analysis of incidences where councillors have felt or been threatened or intimidated during the course of their duties has been in place since March 2025;
- The roll out of the PeopleSafe App to all councillors as of 31 March 2025. This is currently used by frontline council staff and enables access to a range of support (check-ins, alarms, times alerts) when visiting somewhere for the first time or where there are concerns;
- The roll out of councillor access to the Staff Warning Register, via Democratic Services, which enables addresses to be checked for any flagged concerns;
- Developing strong relationships with the Police to enhance coordination and foster mutual understanding of abuse affecting councillors and the role of the Police in addressing it, including the establishment of a named Police officer contact as Elected Officials Advisor, who is available to speak with and support councillors who have concerns regarding their safety;
- Cross council planning for the management of committee meetings where contentious issues are being considered and there are large numbers of people attending, planned protest and a risk of possible disruption;
- A standard, documented process for all committee chairs to adopt should there be any public disorder in a meeting;
- Councillors concerned about their physical safety can apply for funding for practical measures to increase security at their homes;
- Councillor addresses and phone numbers can be removed from the Council website where there are concerns around safety;
- Councillor access to wellbeing services can be enabled upon request;
- Training and awareness raising on a range of issues is periodically undertaken through the Member seminars and briefings. A member working group on training and development has been established that is leading on the induction package and first 12 months of development and support for newly elected councils post May 2027. Part of this will focus upon member safety.

7.4 The Group has identified further areas for consideration, including:

- An annual all-councillor survey;

- Training and/or briefings for councillors on the following: personal safety and risk assessment; social media training and digital citizenship; safer canvassing during the election period (March to May 2027) and conflict de-escalation;
- Provision of mentor support for councillors, made available following an incident, and how this would be done through the political groups;
- A review of the current level of support that is available to councillors through the employee wellbeing services.

7.5 Members will be kept informed of developments.

## **8.0 LGA GUIDE TO DISINFORMATION**

8.1 The LGA has published a Guide to disinformation for local councillors - [A guide to disinformation for local councillors | Local Government Association](#) - developed in response to interest from councillors seeking support in approaching and countering disinformation. The Guide sets out the key definitions and tangible actions councillors can taken to respond effectively.

8.2 There is a separate guide for officers – [A guide to disinformation affecting local authorities and their communities | Local Government Association](#).

8.3 There are other LGA resources to support councillors and candidates in their online communications which can also be used to try to curb and limit the spread of disinformation (false information shared with the intent to deceive) - [Digital citizenship: support and resources for councillors | Local Government Association](#).

## **9.0 UPDATING OF LGA GUIDANCE ON MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

9.1 It appears that LGA Guidance on Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct ([Guidance on Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct | Local Government Association](#)), now includes more hyperlinks to other guides and resources such as:

[Full word english version guide for councillors on handling intimidation FINAL.pdf](#)

[Social media guidance for councillors | Local Government Association](#)

[Civility in public life | Local Government Association](#)

which Members may find helpful.

## **10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **12.0 ENVIRONMENTAL/CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

**14.0**    **RECOMMENDATIONS**

14.1    That the Committee notes the contents of this report.

BARRY KHAN  
Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Background Papers: The Localism Act 2011

County Hall  
NORTHALLERTON

3 March 2026