

North Tyneside Council Report to Standards Committee Date: 3 March 2016

ITEM 7

Title: Code of Conduct for
Members and Co-opted
Members

**Report from Service
Area:**

Law and Governance

Report Authors:

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Wards affected:

All

1.1 Purpose:

The Standards Committee has to consider as a part of its Work Programme for 2015/2016 whether any changes are necessary to the Code of Conduct for Members and the Local Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code of Conduct. The Committee requested at its last meeting that the Monitoring Officer undertake an engagement process with all Members of the Council to identify any suggestions for change to the Code of Conduct for Members or the Local Arrangements that are considered necessary.

In addition the Standards Committee has received a referral from Cabinet of a recommendation of the Children's Education and Skills Sub-Committee and the work of Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Group in relation to the addition of an obligation into the Code of Conduct for Members with respect to the reporting of safeguarding suspicions.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

The Committee is requested to:

1. note that no suggestions have been received from individual Members of the Council requesting changes to the Code of Conduct for Members and the Authority's Local Arrangements;
2. consider whether an obligation to require Members to advise the Authority of safeguarding suspicions should be incorporated into the Code of Conduct; and, if so
3. consider and amend, as necessary, the proposed wording of the obligation (as set in the report below) and refer the proposed addition to the Code of Conduct to the Constitution Task Group prior to its consideration at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

1.3 Information

Annual review of the Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members and the Local Arrangement for dealing with Complaints against Members

The Standards Committee has been considering as a part of its Work Programme for 2015/2016 whether any changes are necessary to the Code of Conduct for Members and the Local Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members.

The Code of Conduct and the Local Arrangements were most recently reviewed in 2014 and amendments at that time were made to the Local Arrangements.

At its meeting of the Committee in December 2015, the Committee requested that the Monitoring Officer write to all Members of the Council to seek suggestions for change to the Code of Conduct or the Local Arrangements that are considered necessary.

No suggested amendments to the Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members or the Local Arrangements have been received from individual Members.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Sub Group recommendations

Cabinet at its meeting on 8 February 2016 referred a recommendation of the Children's Education and Skills Sub-Committee and the work of Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Group to the Standards Committee. The referral requests the Standards Committee to:

“review the Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members and consider including a provision that Members must report any suspicion of sexual exploitation or intelligence received on any safeguarding issues be referred to the authority's Front Door Service and that failure to do so would be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct.”

At the last meeting of the Committee in December 2015, the Chair of the Standards Committee referred to the above recommendation as a part of the Committee's discussions in relation to ethical governance within the Authority. The Committee made a number of initial comments in relation to the recommendation. These initial comments are set out in the minutes of the meeting.

The Code of Conduct is divided into 4 Parts. The first Part provides the “General Conduct” obligations placed on Members and Co-opted Members. The recommendation of the Sub-Group if adopted by the Council would create an additional obligation within the first Part of the Code of Conduct.

A suggested wording for this obligation is set out below:

“12. You must report any suspicion you have or any intelligence/information you have received on any safeguarding issue regarding children or vulnerable adults, including potential or actual sexual exploitation, to the Authority and where appropriate the Police.”

The Committee is requested to consider whether an obligation of the kind recommended should be included within the Authority's Code of Conduct. As a part of the consultation with Members of the Council on any changes to the Code of Conduct, as detailed above,

correspondence from one Member has been received supporting the recommendation of the Sub-Group.

If the Committee is of the view that an obligation should be included, the Committee is requested to consider and amend as necessary, the proposed wording of the obligation (as set out above) to be placed in Part 1 of the Code of Conduct and refer the proposed addition to the Code of Conduct to the Constitution Task Group.

The final decision to include the obligation is a matter for the Full Council when it considers changes to the Constitution at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2016.

1.4 Appendices

Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members

Appendix 2: Local Arrangements for dealing with Complaints against Members

1.5 Contact officers:

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1.6 Background information:

None.