
**Report of Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
and Monitoring Officer**

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To inform Members of the national picture on standards issues affecting Local Government.

Executive summary

- 2 This report is for information to update the Committee on national developments and cases which relate to the work of the Committee since the last meeting on 6 September 2024.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 The Standards Committee is recommended to:
 - (a) note the report and request that Officers monitor the progress of the matters referred to and keep the Committee updated; and
 - (b) consider any recommendations it wishes to make arising out of the contents of the report.

Background

- 4 As agreed by the Committee on 07 June 2024, as part of the Annual Work Programme, this is a standing agenda item with a quarterly update to the Committee.

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council councillor given advice after ‘joker’ comment triggered complaint

- 5 A Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council councillor has been given words of advice by the authority’s Monitoring Officer following an exchange on social media which sparked a code of conduct complaint.
- 6 The complainant was an ex-councillor who was engaged in an online debate. The complainant stated that they “*can’t wait to get the jokers out*”. The subject member replied that “*the joker is already out*” in reference to the ex-councillor. This led to a complaint being made against the subject member.
- 7 While the monitoring officer acknowledged that using this term was a potential code of conduct issue, any breach of the code in these circumstances would have been minor and would not merit any formal sanctions if the complaint proceeded to a hearing.

The Deputy Prime Minister announces consultations on remote meetings and tougher standards regime

- 8 The Government has announced plans to consult on allowing councillors to attend meetings remotely, as well as on changing the standards regime to give councils the power to suspend members who have breached their local authority's code of conduct.
- 9 Speaking at the Local Government Association (LGA) conference on 24 October, Secretary of State Angela Rayner said the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government would also consult on allowing councillors to keep their home addresses private.
- 10 Detailing the Ministry's plans for tackling poor councillor conduct, the Secretary of State said that she would consult on reforms to the local government standards framework which would include a proposal to allow for the suspension of members who violate local authority codes of conduct. The Secretary of State also discussed reported cases of persistent bullying and alluded to increasing local authorities’ powers to address poor councillor conduct.
- 11 The consultation on remote meetings was published on 24 October 2024. Details have been shared with all Members inviting their responses on the consultation to assist with the preparation of a response to the consultation on behalf of the Council.

- 12 The timetable for legislation in respect of members addresses and consulting on the standards regime is still to be confirmed.

Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) marks 30th anniversary of Nolan Committee with report urging continued articulation of value of Seven Principles of Public Life

- 13 In order to mark the 30th anniversary of the Nolan Committee's establishment, the Committee on Standards in Public Life has published a report that reflects on the 'Nolan Principles', also known as the 'Seven Principles of Public Life'.
- 14 The Nolan Committee was established in 1994 following the 'cash for questions' scandal in the House of Commons. The Committee issued its first report in May 1995 and this report coined the 'Seven Principles of Public Life'.
- 15 The 'Seven Principles of Public Life' are honesty, integrity, objectivity, accountability, selflessness, openness, and leadership. Since their inception, they have underpinned the Committee on Standards in Public Life's reports and have also contributed heavily to the current standards landscape in the United Kingdom. For example, it is a legal requirement under the Localism Act to include these principles in a local authority's code of conduct.
- 16 The Committee's new report, published 24 October 2024, examined the definitions of 'public' and 'public interest' in relation to the Nolan Principles. It also considered how the principles are important in organisations which operate for the public good.
- 17 The report asserts that the Nolan Principles have been useful since their inception as a means of expressing the nature of the understanding between those who hold public office and the public themselves. However, it also states that there is now a challenge relating to articulating the Nolan Principles' value and meaning for "*new generations in an increasingly complex world*".

Background papers

[Rayner announces consultations on remote meetings and tougher standards regime](#)

[Words of advice for councillor after 'joker' comment triggered complaint - Teesside Live](#)

[Redcar and Cleveland Monitoring Officer Decision](#)

[Standards watchdog marks 30th anniversary of Nolan Committee with report urging continued articulation of value of Seven Principles of Public Life](#)

[The Nolan Principles – keeping the public front of mind – Committee on Standards in Public Life](#)

[The Nolan Principles -
Public Standards the Public Interest and Public Service.pdf](#)

Other useful documents

None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council has a duty under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its Members and to adopt a code of conduct that is consistent with the Nolan Principles. Ensuring that the Standards Committee is kept up to date with national Standards issues is expected to facilitate compliance with this duty.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.