Walsall Council

Standards Committee

22 September 2025 at 18:00

Conference room 2 at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

Public access to meeting via: www.walsallcouncilwebcasts.com

Membership:
Councillor P. Gill (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor A. Andrew
Councillor H. Bashir
Councillor R. Burley
Councillor K. Ferguson
Councillor M. Follows
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor R. Larden
Councillor K. Sears

Independent Members:
Andy Green
Deborah Mardner
Carl Magness

Quorum: Four Members

Democratic Services, The Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact name: Luke Cook Telephone: 01922 650959 Email: luke.cook@walsall.gov.uk
Walsall Council Website

If you are disabled and require help to and from the meeting room, please contact the person above

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Members are reminded that both registered and new interests not yet registered should be declared.

Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority: (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge): (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where: (a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and (b) either: (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.

2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:

   (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or

   (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.

7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:

   (a) Constitutes a trades secret;

   (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);

   (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

Part 1 – Public Session

1. Apologies

2. Substitutions
To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.

3. Minutes
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2025.
(Enclosed – Pages 5 to 8)

4. Declarations of Interest

5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):
To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.

6. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report
Update on complaints referred by the Ombudsman to the Council.
(Enclosed - Pages 9 to 20)

7. Member DBS Check Update
Update on the current uptake of criminal record checks by elected members.
(Enclosed – Pages 21 to 23)

8. Member Criminal Record Checks Protocol
The report sets out a draft Protocol for consideration.
(Enclosed – Pages 24 to 29)

9. Code of Conduct for Employees
To consider and review the current Employee Code of Conduct.
(Enclosed - Pages 30 to 61)

10. Standards Annual Report
For the Committee to agree the Standards Committee Annual Report.
(Enclosed - Pages 62 to 73)

11. Member Training Brochure
To agree a Member Learning and Development Programme for 2025/26.
(Enclosed - Pages 74 to 91)

Minutes of the Standards Committee held in Conference Room 2, Walsall Council House

Monday 7 July 2025 at 6.00pm

Committee Members present:
Councillor P. Gill (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor A. Andrew
Councillor H. Bashir
Councillor K. Ferguson
Councillor M. Follows
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor R. Larden
Councillor K. Sears

Officers Present:
E. Adefehinti – Interim Director of Governance
L. Cook – Democratic Services Officer

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Burley, and Independent Member C. Magness.

2. **Substitutions**

None.

3. **Minutes**

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April, 2025 was submitted.

[annexed]

A Member thanked the outgoing Chair Councillor Martin for her service and passion for Standards and extended best wishes to the incoming Chair Councillor Gill.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held 22 April, 2025, copies having been circulated in advance, be approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

5. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items to be considered in private session.

6. **Member DBS Check Update**

The Democratic Services Officer presented an update report on the status of criminal record check uptake by Members.

[annexed]

In presenting the report the Democratic Services Officer highlighted that four Members had not undertaken a criminal record check. Since the publication of the report, one of these Members had applied and their application was processing. A further Member had completed the relevant form, and the Democratic Services Officer was awaiting their identification documents. There were a further 10 Members with a valid criminal record check who were required to undertake a new one due to a change in role or committee membership.

Members asked questions regarding the remaining two Members who had not taken any action in respect of their criminal record check. The Democratic Services Officer explained that both Members had been outstanding a criminal record check for over twelve months and that one of them had previously undertaken a check, but this had since expired. As part of the steps to encourage uptake the Democratic Services Officer explained that he wrote to Members, provided them with relevant guidance, followed up with telephone calls and would offer to meet in person or online to assist with applications. This was also followed up with the relevant group leaders.

Members raised concerns regarding Members sitting on certain committees without undertaking a DBS check. In response, The Democratic Services Officer explained that there was no primary legislation that required a Member to undertake a criminal record check. A Member commented that other employers would normally require employees to undertake a DBS check when working with vulnerable adults or children. The Monitoring Officer explained that Members were not considered as employees under case law and as an employer, the Council could not compel Members to complete a check.

Members emphasised the importance of formalising within the Constitution, the expectation that all Councillors would undertake a criminal record check, noting that membership of the Council would change over time. It was also important that it should be clear about what would happen if a criminal record check was not undertaken. The Committee considered that the position of Councillors be published in respect of their DBS check status.

Resolved

That:

1. **The information available on DBS checks for Members be noted; and**
2. **The Standards Committee receives a further update on the uptake of voluntary DBS checks by elected Members at its first meeting in the 2025-26 municipal year; and**
3. **The requirement for a Councillor to undertake a DBS check be incorporated into the Constitution and the position of Councillor in respect of their DBS status be publicised.**

7. **Work Programme 2025/26**

The Director of Governance presented the report which set out a proposed work programme for the committee for the ensuing municipal year.

[annexed]

In presenting the report, the Director of Governance highlighted several items to be considered including a Monitoring Officer Annual Report regarding complaints and data breaches. There was an item regarding the Local Government Association Debate Not Hate campaign which had been ongoing for several years.

The Director of Governance explained the Government consultation in relation to strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England had closed and the outcome was awaited. This would be added to the schedule once published.

The Committee discussed the Code of Conduct for Employees as part of its terms of reference and whether there should be a separate code for Senior Officers.

Resolved

That:

1. **The Standards Committee approved the proposed work programme.**
2. **A report be received at a future meeting regarding the Code of Conduct for Employees to consider its revision for Senior Officers.**

8. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 22 September 2025.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.35 p.m.

Signed:

Date:

Agenda Item 6

Standards Committee

22 September 2025

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review 2024/25

Summary of report:

The report provides Members of the Committee with details relating to the role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, providing information on the number and range of complaints referred by the Ombudsman to the Council during the financial year 2024/25, and to submit for Committee's consideration the Ombudsman's annual letter for 2024/25 (Appendix 1 below).

Background papers:

None.

Recommendation:

1. To note the content of the report.

1.0 Background

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (shortened in this report to LGSCO or the Ombudsman) investigates complaints escalated to them across a range of local authority functions and services, including commissioned services for example, registered adult social care providers.

1.1 Procedures

The Ombudsman's involvement in a complaint usually has 2 stages:

1.1(i) Assessment - including Initial Enquiry and Initial Investigation

Complaints received by the Ombudsman are considered initially by an assessment team, who try to establish whether the complaint has already been responded to via the council's own procedures and whether that internal complaint process has reached a conclusion.

The Ombudsman will expect a prompt response to any initial enquiries, usually within 5 working days.

At this stage, the Ombudsman would also consider the following:

- Is the issue something that the law allows them to investigate?
- Is there good reason for the Ombudsman to formally investigate the complaint?

Below are the outcomes which can occur at the assessment stage, which will be shared with both the complainant and the Council:

- **Invalid or incomplete –** Ombudsman was not given enough information to consider the issue.
- **Advice given –** Ombudsman provided the complainant with early advice or explained where to go for the right help.
- **Referred back for local resolution –** the complaint has been brought to the Ombudsman prematurely before the Council was given the chance to consider it first.
- **Closed after initial enquiries –** Ombudsman assessed the complaint but decided against completing a full investigation. This might be because the law says they are not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds for them to investigate.

1.1(ii) Detailed Investigation

If, following its assessment stage, the Ombudsman decides to move on to a full investigation of the complaint, then the Council will be sent detailed enquiries relating to the case and is expected to respond to those enquiries within a set timescale, usually within 20 working days.

The Ombudsman may ask for specific documents, comments from relevant council officers or members, or answers to specific questions on the matter.

Some complaint investigations can require a significant amount of documentation to enable the investigator to fully understand the details of the complaint.

Based on the findings of the investigation, the Ombudsman will then issue a draft decision which the Council and the complainant are invited to comment on. Feedback is requested within a set timeframe, usually within 10 working days.

Following this, the Ombudsman will then issue a revised final decision letter to the council and the complainant with one of two potential outcomes:

> **Upheld** – The Ombudsman found evidence of fault or found that the Council accepted fault early on.
> **Not upheld -** a detailed investigation was carried out but did not find evidence of fault on the part of the Council.

The Ombudsman decides on whether the organisation was at fault by investigating what happened, and what should have happened, according to the laws and policies in place at the time. Where the Ombudsman has ‘upheld’ a complaint they will include recommended actions that the council should take within the final decision letter along with set timescales to complete the actions – usually between 1 and 3 months.

Some possible recommended actions / remedies that can be suggested are:

- An apology to the complainant.
- Financial payments – for time and trouble, or to reflect the impact of council service failure.

- A review of policies and procedures.
- Staff training.

The Ombudsman's decisions are published on their website 3 months after a case is closed, and all recommended actions have been carried out. These decision notices will identify the council concerned but otherwise are written to maintain the confidentiality of the complainant and other parties whose actions are described in the notice.

The LGSCO may, on rare occasions, issue a formal report, referenced as being in the 'public interest'. In cases where a formal report is issued, it must be considered by the Council, as set out in the Council's constitution.

Further details on how the LGSCO works can be found in the *Manual for Councils* issued to assist particularly in respect of the day to day working relationship between Ombudsman staff and each council's designated 'link officer'. This manual is available on the Ombudsman's website via this link: Manual for Councils - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

1.2 National and Local Context 2024/25

1.2.1 National Context:

Annually, the Ombudsman pulls together the national picture of trends and common issues that arise from LGSCO complaints. The Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2024-2025 highlighted the following key points nationally:

a. 20,773 national complaints and enquiries were received in 2024/25 – a record number and exceeding 20k for the first time - an increase of 16% on the 17,939 received in 2023/24.
b. 19,660 complaints were decided, up from 17,126 in 2023/24.
c. The Ombudsman states that the increase in complaints and the level of fault they find at national level - 83% compared with 80% in 2023/24 – indicates the systemic nature of issues across all of local government.
d. Complaints about education and children's services are still dominating the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's casework, but housing cases are now the second biggest area of concern for people complaining.
e. Of the 20,773 complaints received, Education and Children's Services made up 27 per cent of the caseload and 47 per cent of all upheld investigations. The Ombudsman found fault in 91 per cent of all Education and Children's complaints, and 94 per cent of cases involving special educational needs provision.
f. Housing cases accounted for 17 per cent of all cases received and accounted for a higher proportion than last year. The third highest area of casework was adult care services, taking 13 per cent of the Ombudsman's workload – a slightly smaller proportion than last year. Of these, 78 per cent of investigations carried out were upheld.
g. 26 Public Interest reports were issued about local authority cases that raised serious issues or highlighted matters of public interest that are given extra prominence. Just over three quarters of these were on investigations about Education & Children's Services and Housing.

h. Compliance with the Ombudsman's recommendations in final decisions was at 99.5%, compared with 99.3% in 2023/24

During 2024/25, the LGSCO continued to work with 20 pilot councils to embed and implement their new Complaint Handling Code (the Code). The Ombudsman have issued this code as "advice and guidance" for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974 and expect it to be followed when dealing with all non-statutory complaints and will start considering the Code as part of their processes from April 2026. The Council's Customer Experience Centre is leading on the Council's implementation of the Code.

1.2.2. Local Context:

a. Walsall Council experienced a rise in both the number of complaints received and determined during the year, compared with 2023/24. The numbers received increased by 31 to 87 in total, while the numbers determined increased from 59 to 79 although only 8 of the 79 went through a full investigation process.
b. As in 2023/24, Childrens & Education Services has experienced a rise in the number of complaint enquiries, in line with national trends, particularly in relation to SEND services and alternative education provision. Locally, complaint activity from a Walsall based advocate for parents of SEND children is a factor in these numbers. Of the 7 complaints upheld in 2023/24, 4 were in Education and Children's Services.
c. Walsall's performance against key indicators used by the Ombudsman in its Annual Report is positive comparatively nationally and regionally in terms of compliance with the carrying out of remedial actions following a final decision and identifying remedies locally to avoid a formal investigation.
d. Walsall Council's comparative performance against the rate of upheld complaints per 100,000 residents following full investigation indicates that Walsall is **better** than the overall national average, metropolitan borough council average, and West Midland councils' average.
e. For the 11th consecutive year since the Ombudsman introduced its annual letter, Walsall Council was not the subject of a published report (public interest report), indicating no serious concerns about any service or complaint issues in the Council.
f. In comparison to last year, the 2024/25 annual letter identified no concerns around Walsall's timeliness in responding to the Ombudsman's enquiries on time and in terms of the quality of responses and information provided.

1.3 Detail of Complaints received and determined in 2024/25

The Annual Review Letter is attached as Appendix 1. The Ombudsman also produces an interactive map which shows the performance details for all councils Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Headlines from this year's annual letter:

- Overall, the Ombudsman received 87 complaint enquiries relating to Walsall Council, up from the 56 received in 2023/24
- 8 complaints of the 79 determined in year progressed to full investigation, compared to 19 of the 59 determined enquiries in 2023/24.

- In 2024/25 87.5% of complaints that were fully investigated were upheld (7 out of 8) compared to 95% (18 out of 19) in 2023/24.
- The Ombudsman recorded 100% satisfaction with the council's compliance in the cases where they recommended a remedy (based on 11 compliance outcomes).

Complaints received during 2024/25

The Committee will note that there were 87 complaint enquiries received by the LGSCO relating to Walsall Council in 2024/25, an increase from 56 complaints in 2023/24. This increase reflected national trends, as highlighted in the national context section above. These were categorised as per the following table:

Category	Numbers received **2024/25** (2023/24)
Adult Care Services	**17** (9)
Benefits & Tax	**8** (4)
Corporate and Other Services	**7** (2)
Education and Children's Services	**29** (20)
Environment Services	**13** (8)
Highways & Transport	**3** (1)
Housing	**6** (2)
Planning and Development	**4 (**9)
Other	**0** (1)
Total	**87** (56)

Members should note that the categories used here by the Ombudsman may not match exactly how the Council allocates different functions to service areas or directorates.

A drop was seen in the number of complaint enquiries received by the LGSCO relating to Planning issues for the second consecutive year; all other service areas showed an increase in complaint enquiries.

Complaints determined during 2024/25

During 2024/25 the Ombudsman determined 79 complaints (59 in 2023/24) relating to Walsall Council. The outcomes of the Ombudsman's decision are set out in the table below.

Category (Determinations)	**2024/25** (2023/24)
Advice Given	**1**(1)
Incomplete or invalid	**4**(2)
Referred for local resolution	**28**(18)
Closed after Initial Enquiries	**38**(19)
Detailed Investigations – Not Upheld	**1**(1)
Detailed Investigations - Upheld	**7** (18)
Total Determinations	**79** (59)
Uphold Rate	**87.5%** (95%)

Note: The totals shown in the received and determined tables do not match as there will be some cases determined in one year which were received in the previous year.

1.4 Upheld Complaints

The **7** (18 in 23/24) complaints that were categorised as 'upheld' in **2024/25** related to:

- Adult Care services **2** (2),
- Education and children's services **4**(14)
- Planning Services **0** (1),
- Corporate **0** (1),
- Environment Services **1**(0)

One of the seven upheld complaints - (2003157) - related to where the Council was seen to have already put things right prior to an Ombudsman investigation – early resolution. These are still categorised as 'upheld' by the Ombudsman despite having already been satisfactorily addressed.

The Ombudsman introduced a new measure in its performance data last year - the number of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents, which allows for fairer comparison and benchmarking. Walsall had 2.4% upheld decisions per 100,000 residents compared to a rate of 4.7%. for all metropolitan borough councils.

Details relating to the **7** complaints which were categorised as 'upheld' are set out below. The full decision notices are available on the relevant complaint link provided and on the Ombudsman's website. All notices are written in a way which protects the confidentiality of individuals concerned.

a) 23 008 896 04 April 2024 – Education/Alternative Provision

Summary: Miss X complained the Council failed to:

- undertake an annual review for her son (Y) within the timescales for transferring to a secondary school
- provide him with full-time education and special educational provision from the sixth day after his permanent exclusion
- make a decision and start making personal budget (PB) payments without delay
- and include in his personal budget the equivalent of the cost of Free School Meals he would have received at school.

The Ombudsman found fault with the Council for not securing alternative provision for Y for six weeks after Y's permanent exclusion from school and with the Council's delay in amending Y's EHC Plan before his move to a secondary placement, but the Council's fault did not cause injustice to Y and Miss X.

Remedies: Apologise to Miss X and Y for the injustice caused to them by the faults identified and pay Miss X £800 to recognise the negative impact of the lack of alternative provision in the first six weeks after Y's permanent exclusion.

b) 22 015 347 12 May 2024 – Education/ SEND

Summary: Mrs X complained the Council failed to provide a suitable education or follow proper process to review her son's Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan after they moved to the Council's area in late 2021. The Council's failure to follow proper process, the delay in reviewing and amending Y's EHC plan and the failure to provide alternative provision was fault.

Remedies: apologise to Mrs X and Y for the delays the EHC process and in issuing a final EHC plan and for the failure to provide alternative educational provision. In addition the council was to pay £1,350 to the family to acknowledge the impact of the loss of education on them between September 2022 and November 2022 and pay £350 to Mrs X to recognise the distress and frustration she experienced.

c) 24 003 157 22-July-2024 – Adult Care Services/Residential Care

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about failures in communication for an adult's social care and funding. The Council has completed a thorough investigation and reached sound conclusions. It is unlikely the Ombudsman could add to that or reach a different outcome. The Council has apologised to the complainant for confusion and distress caused by its failures in communication and spoken with relevant staff to prevent future problems.

d) 23 020 235 – 11 Sept 2024 Environment & Regulation/ Refuse & Recycling

Summary: Mrs X complained the Council had destroyed her bin whilst she was staying at her parent's address. The Council was at fault for failing to notify Mrs X before destroying the bin. This caused distress to Mrs X and her parents are without a bin.

Remedies: Apologise, arrange for Mrs X's parents to have a free bin and review its processes.

e) 24 010 347 – 04 Dec 2024 – Education/SEND

Summary: Mrs X complained via her representative that the Council delayed considering her request for a reassessment of her child Y's Special Educational Needs (SEN). Mrs X said this delayed her right of appeal. The Ombudsman indicated at the assessment stage that if it were to investigate this complaint it is likely they would find the Council at fault.

Remedies: The Council apologised to Mrs X for the delay and reminded staff of the importance of responding to requests on time. The Council also agreed to resolve the complaint early by offering to make a suitable payment of £100 to the complainant to remedy the injustice this caused, which avoided a full investigation.

f) 23 013 447 – 09 Dec 2024 Adult Care Services/ Residential Care

Summary: Ms X complained the Council failed to provide safe and suitable care for her grandfather Mr Y while he was in a care home, causing distress. The Ombudsman found fault by the Council because it failed to provide clarity to its safeguarding enquiry conclusions in Mr Y's case.

Remedies: Apologise to Ms X and make her a payment of £300 The Council also had to review the safeguarding report and where possible provide professional judgement whether neglect occurred in the care home in Mr Y's case and carry out training or remind officers who conduct safeguarding investigations to ensure reports are definitive and not contradictory.

g) 24 006 640 – 17 Feb 2025 Education/ Alternative Provision

Summary: Ms M complained that the Council failed to arrange alternative education for her son, B, when he stopped attending school in February 2023. The Council accepted it failed to provide Ms M's son, B, with suitable education from February 2023 until he started at a special school in February 2024. The Council also took too long to issue B's education, health and care (EHC) plan

Remedies: The Council apologises for the faults identified and made a symbolic payment of £6,000 to acknowledge the education B missed and the impact of his absence from education.

1.4.1 Compliance with remedies

The Ombudsman monitors whether councils have fulfilled the terms of recommended actions and remedies resulting from a complaint investigation. Annual Review Letters indicate where a council has complied with remedies within the Ombudsman's set timescale, is late complying, or where a council has not complied with the remedy.

In Walsall's case, there were 11 compliance outcomes in the 7 complaints where a remedy was set out for the council to carry out during 2024/25. The Annual Letter indicates that in **all cases**, the Ombudsman was satisfied that the council had implemented their recommendations, and that **all** were carried out within timescale.

1.5 Comparative figures and statistics

Data provided by the Ombudsman - Local government complaint reviews - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - as part of its Annual Report enables comparison to be made between Walsall and national outturns and with other local authorities. The comparative figures relating to neighbouring West Midland authorities are taken from the national and regional data in the link and are set out below.

Some of the headline comparisons for Walsall in 2024/25 taken from the LGSCO data are:

National:

- 83% of complaints upheld nationally compared with **87.5%** for Walsall. [81% for all similar authorities – Metropolitan Borough Councils].
- In 12% of upheld cases, councils had already offered a suitable remedy before the complaint was made to the Ombudsman. The comparable figure for Walsall was **14%.**
- Compliance with recommendations remains high at 99.7% nationally **(100% for Walsall).**

- **Walsall** had only **2.4** upheld decisions per 100,000 residents, compared with 6.2% nationally

West Midlands:

- Walsall received fewer complaints and enquiries in 2024/25 than all West Midland authorities below except for Wolverhampton and Solihull.
- Walsall had the lowest uphold rate per 100,00 residents of all WM councils.
- The equivalent figures for the WM councils were:

	B'ham	Cov	Dudley	Sandwell	Solihull	Wolv	Walsall
Received	572	101	121	122	65	54	**87**
Investigated	114	22	18	16	18	8	**8**
Upheld	94	17	14	14	16	7	**7**
% Uphold rate	82%	77%	78%	88%	89%	88%	**87.5%**
Upheld per 100,000 residents	8.1	4.7	4.3	4.0	7.3	2.6	**2.4%**

1.6 Good Practice

Committee is asked to note that the Ombudsman also has an important role in identifying, from the complaints that it receives from citizens and service users across the country and from its interaction with councils, particular issues and areas of concern which it shares with councils generally via bulletins, news releases and in particular specific focus reports. Focus Reports and Good Practice Guides collate case studies from Ombudsman investigations to highlight either their most serious concerns or more specialist practitioner advice.

In 2024/25, the LGSCO issued the following:

- 'People not structures – putting people at the heart of integrated care'– (July 2024)
- 'Medical assessments for Housing Applications' (July 2024)
- 'Domestic abuse and housing decisions' (Oct 2024)
- 'Household and Waste Offences (Oct 2024)

These, and other focus reports published in previous years and in the current year, are available for downloading on the LGSCO's website https://www.LGSCO.org.uk/information-centre/reports

In addition, the LGSCO circulates a weekly list of decisions published that week in five service areas: benefits and taxation, adult social care, children and education, housing and planning.

2.0 Resource and legal considerations:

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. In some cases, the local settlement of particular complaints may include a financial element, for the complainant's 'time and trouble' in pursuing the matter, and in appropriate cases the payment of sums reflecting the impact of the council's failings on the complainant. Details of any financial redress recommended by the Ombudsman and agreed by

the relevant service is provided alongside the summary of upheld complaints in **Section 1.4** above.

The Ombudsman service operates in accordance with provisions in the Local Government Act 1974, as amended by subsequent legislation. As noted above, the LGSCO has issued a new manual for councils setting out operational matters relating to its procedures available on its website.

3.0 Performance and Risk Management issues:

The Ombudsman's annual letter and annual report provides details relating to the number of complaints received, and the outcome of complaints. See www.LGSCO.org.uk/information-centre

The Annual Letter no longer provides figures for the average time taken to provide a response to the Ombudsman's enquiries. The council's LGSCO link officer works with services to ensure that responses to Ombudsman enquiries are quality assured and made within expected timescales.

4.0 Equality Implications:

Details relating to the Ombudsman service are available on the council website. The Ombudsman no longer produces its own complaint leaflets, contact details and methods are set out on its website. Where appropriate, council complaint responses include information regarding the right of complainants to approach the LGSCO and their contact information.

5.0 Consultation:

There is no requirement to consult on this report.

Author:

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Appendix 1

21 May 2025

By email

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Bennett

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

Your annual statistics are available here.

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published good practice guides to support councils to adopt our Complaint Handling Code. The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the
real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free training resources organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular complaint handling training programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Chair,
Commission for Local Administration in England

Standards Committee

22 September 2025

Member Criminal Record Checks

1. Aim

To provide an updated position on the uptake of criminal record checks for elected members since its last discussion at Standards Committee on 7 July 2025.

2. Summary

2.1 At the time of writing 57 Members had a valid basic or enhanced criminal record check and the remaining 3 Members had been contacted by Democratic Services to advise what steps they would need to take to complete their check.

2.2 Due to changes in committee memberships 9 of the above-mentioned Members holding a valid criminal record check have been requested to complete a new enhanced check to adhere to the process agreed by Council.

3. Recommendations

That:

3.1 the information available on DBS checks for Members be noted; and

3.2 the Committee receives a further update on the uptake of voluntary DBS checks by elected Members at their meeting in January.

4. Report Detail - Know

4.1 As part of a desire to maintain transparency and high standards of behaviour Council agreed at its meeting on 25 May 2016 to ask all Members to undergo criminal record checks at least every 4 years and to make an annual declaration to the Monitoring Officer on any changes to their criminal record. This decision was made following a recommendation of the Standards Committee which had investigated methods to improve accountability and protection of Members because of concerns that arose out of multiple national abuse enquiries.

4.2 Dependent on their committee membership Members are asked to either complete a basic disclosure or an enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check. It was originally agreed by Council that members of a committee or panel or portfolio holders that manage issues relating to children should have further accountability and protection through the enhanced process.

4.3 On 18 September 2023 Council approved the recommendation made by Standards Committee that members of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Holders managing issues relating to adults should all undertake an enhanced adult DBS check. It has also been agreed that the Cabinet will all undertake enhanced DBS checks covering both children's and adult's barred lists.

4.4 The criminal record check process consists of completing an online form and providing 3 forms of identification from a list of acceptable ID which is circulated to all Members by email when requesting that they complete the check. The identification is to be scanned or brought into the Democratic Services Team to be scanned and verified. If it is not provided within 3 months of the online form being completed the form expires and a new form will have to be completed.

4.5 Members are required to complete a DBS check every four years. As of 12 September 2025, 57 Members hold a valid basic or enhanced criminal record check, which have been registered by the Monitoring Officer.

4.6 There are 3 Members who do not have a valid DBS check or their DBS check on record has expired. These Members have been contacted by Democratic Services and support has been offered to assist them to complete the process. Of these 3 Members, 2 have completed the application form and we are currently waiting for their relevant ID documents.

4.7 The requirement for basic or enhanced DBS checks is dependent on appointments to committees. Adjourned Annual Council convened on 10 June, 2025 and confirmed the appointments for the 25/26 municipal year.

4.8 Due to the new committee membership, there are a further 9 Councillors are invited to complete an enhanced check, to adhere with the above-mentioned process agreed by Council.

4.9 This gives a total of 12 Members who are currently being supported through the process of applying for and receiving their new DBS check.

4.10 Members are also asked to confirm, in the form of an annual declaration, if there have been any changes to their criminal record since their last check was conducted. As DBS checks are completed throughout the year, the deadline for annual declaration is not the same for all members. They may also be superseded by a new DBS if they have moved to an enhanced check. Democratic Services contact members to remind them of the need for an annual declaration prior to the expiry of the previous declaration.

4.11 In addition to the bespoke service mentioned in 4.10, Democratic Services write to Members on a six-monthly basis to request action in relation to their criminal record check. This was last undertaken on 23 June 2025 and Democratic Services has followed up with members in the interim to offer any assistance in completing a check.

4.12 If Members require any further assistance with the process Democratic Services Officers can respond to any queries by phone or email or schedule an appointment to complete the online form with the Member.

4.13 Once the criminal record check has been successfully completed the certificate is sent to the Member at their home address. This process can take up to 15 working days.

5. Financial information

A single basic disclosure check costs £23.72 and an enhanced disclosure check costs £51.72.

6. Legal implications

The Council is not legally required to undertake criminal record checks of all Members but as stated above doing so provides Members with further accountability and protection whilst also maintaining transparency and high standards of behaviour. It has also been identified as best practice in a recent independent review of the Disclosure and Barring Service commissioned by the Home Office.

7. Decide

The committee is asked to review the information available and is invited to comment upon any improvements that could be made to assist Members in completing the process.

8. Respond

The Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services team will continue to request Members complete any required actions in relation to their criminal record checks on a six-monthly basis. The Monitoring Officer will register all criminal record checks received.

9. Review

It is recommended that the committee continues to monitor the status of Members' criminal record checks.

Author
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Standards Committee

22 September 2025

Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol

1. Aim

To seek approval for a Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol to be presented to Council for consideration.

2. Summary

2.1 At its meeting on 7 July 2025 the Standards Committee requested that the requirement for Members to undertake a criminal record check be incorporated into the Council's Constitution and that the status of members' DBS checks be published.

2.2 This report is to present to Standards Committee a Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol to formalise the requirement for members to undertake a DBS check.

3. Recommendation

That Standards Committee approve the Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol attached at **Appendix 1** to this report to be submitted to Council for consideration.

4. Report Detail - Know

4.1 The Council requires that all members undertake a criminal record check every four years and to make an annual declaration to the Monitoring Officer on any changes to their criminal record. Dependant on their role or committee membership Members are asked to either complete a basic disclosure or an enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.

4.2 Council agreed at its meeting on 25 May 2016 to ask all Members to undertake a criminal record check. It was originally agreed by Council that members of a committee or panel or portfolio holders that manage issues relating to children should have further accountability and protection through the enhanced process.

4.2 Disclosure and Barring Service checks are not legally mandated for Local Authority members. However, Simon Bailey conducted an independent review of the Disclosure and Barring Regime which was published in April 2023. With reference to local authorities, the review made the following recommendation:

> *I recommend that an enhanced criminal record check is made mandatory for all councillors in Unitary and Upper Tier Authorities who are being considered for appointment to any committee involved in*

decisions on the provisions of children's services or services for vulnerable adults. I accept that this would require legislation and therefore some inevitable delay, so I further recommend that these authorities are encouraged to adopt this procedure as best practice pending legislation.

4.3 In response to the independent review, on 18 September 2023 Council approved the recommendation made by Standards Committee that members of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Holders managing issues relating to adults should all undertake an enhanced adult DBS check. It has also been agreed that the Cabinet will all undertake enhanced DBS checks covering both children's and adults.

4.4 Following on from the independent review, in January 2024, a letter was sent from the Minister for Local Government to all Leaders of Unitary and Upper Tier Authorities in England encouraging that the recommendation be adopted as best practice for all councillors.

4.5 A Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol has been prepared and is attached at **Appendix 1** to the report. If approved, the protocol would be submitted to Council to consider its inclusion within the Constitution. The key elements of the Protocol can be summarised as follows: -

- That members are requested to undertake a basic or enhanced DBS check, depending on their role or Committee membership.
- Once a member has completed a DBS check, their Committee Management Information System (CMIS) profile will reflect that it has been carried out.
- That members can use existing DBS check certificates where they are from a credible organisation.
- That members must undergo a criminal record check every four years and to complete an annual self-declaration in the intervening years.
- That members who fail to undertake a DBS check may be in breach of the Code of Conduct.
- In the event that any offences are revealed on completion of a DBS check, the Monitoring Officer will consider the impact and discuss this with the Member and if necessary, their Group Leader.

4.6 Whilst it is not a statutory requirement for Councillors to undertake a DBS check, the inclusion of a Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol will formalise the requirement through necessary amendments to the Constitution. Any Member who fails to complete a valid DBS check will be in potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

5. Financial information

A single basic disclosure check costs £23.72 and an enhanced disclosure check costs £51.72.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The Council is not legally required to undertake criminal record checks of all Members but as stated above doing so provides Members with further accountability and protection whilst also maintaining transparency and high standards of behaviour. It has also been identified as best practice in a recent independent review of the Disclosure and Barring Service commissioned by the Home Office.

6.2 It is important to note that a DBS Certificate is only an up to date as at the time of issue.

7. Decide

The recommendation is set out in paragraph 3 and the Committee could decide to:

1. Approve the Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol as set out in **Appendix 1**;
2. Reject the Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol; or
3. Choose to revise the Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol;

8. Respond

As the recommendations would require a change to the Constitution, this would be subject to further approval by Council in November 2025.

9. Review

The Committee will continue to monitor the status of Members' criminal record checks and this protocol will be updated as and when required as a result of changes in legislation.

Author
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Signed
Edwina Adefehinti
Interim Director of Governance
Date: 10 September 2025

Members Criminal Record Checks Protocol

Introduction and Principles

1. The purpose of this Protocol is to cover Walsall Council's practice on Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all elected members.

2. It is acknowledged that at present no legislation exists that makes criminal record checks mandatory for Councillors and therefore, this can only form a recommendation rather than a requirement.

3. Council agreed at its meeting on 25 May 2016 to ask all members to undergo criminal record checks at least every 4 years and to make an annual declaration to the Monitoring Officer in the intervening years on any changes to their criminal record.

4. Initially only members of Committees making decisions in relation to children were asked to complete an enhanced DBS check with all other members completing a basic check. On 18th September 2023 Council approved a recommendation to extend enhanced checks to members of Committees making decisions in relation to vulnerable adults.

5. In an independent report commissioned by the Home Office it was recommended that legislation be introduced that made an enhanced criminal record check mandatory for all councillors in Unitary and Upper Tier Authorities who are being considered for appointment to any committee involved in decisions on the provisions of children's services or services for vulnerable adults.

6. The report further recommended that this be adopted as best practice pending any legislation.

7. The Council is required to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by elected members. Requesting Members to undertake a criminal record check provides further accountability and protection whilst maintaining transparency and high standards of behaviour.

Procedure

8. Democratic Services will contact all Members every six months to advise what, if any, action they need to take in respect of their criminal record check and to provide all information needed to allow them to complete their check.

9. If at any point a member takes on additional responsibilities that would lead to them being requested to complete an enhanced check, they will be informed at the earliest practicable opportunity.

10. It is the responsibility of the member themselves to complete their DBS check application but officers in the Democratic Services Team can offer support and guidance if required.

11. Where a DBS check has been undertaken by a member, their profile on the Council's Committee Management Information System (CMIS) will confirm that they hold a valid DBS certificate. No further details of the check will be published.

12. The table below sets out the roles and corresponding level of DBS check that is required of Members based on their role and Committee membership.

Table 1: Roles and requirements

Role	Basic DBS	Enhanced DBS
Leader	N/A	Yes
Deputy Leader	N/A	Yes
Group Leaders	N/A	Yes
Deputy Group Leaders	N/A	Yes
Cabinet Member	N/A	Yes
Mayor	N/A	Yes
Deputy Mayor	N/A	Yes
Members of Corporate Parenting Board	N/A	Yes
Members of Children's Families and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee	N/A	Yes
Members of Health and Wellbeing Board	N/A	Yes
Members of Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	N/A	Yes
All other elected members	Yes	N/A

Transferability

13. Where an elected member has a basic or enhanced DBS check from a credible organisation through their employment or voluntary roles, this can be shown to the Monitoring Officer to be validated.

Annual self-declaration

14. It is recognised that a DBS check shows information that is correct on the day that it is issued and that an elected member's personal circumstances may change at any time.

15. As an additional safeguard all councillors will be required to complete an annual self-declaration form to confirm or report any changes to their criminal records.

16. The Council will work with the Political Groups to ensure elected members understand that they have an obligation to declare any criminal offences/convictions (other than minor offences such as traffic offences) to the Monitoring Officer as soon as reasonably practicable after conviction (i.e. within 3 working days).

Non-Compliance

17. Failure to comply with this policy may amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct.

18. Any elected Members who have not undertaken a DBS check or whose DBS check has lapsed, will be reported to the Monitoring Officer for non-compliance.

19. Group Leaders will be informed of the DBS status of Members within their groups.

20. Standards Committee will receive regular updates on the uptake of Member's DBS checks.

Role of the Elected Member

- To provide a prompt and timely response to requests for a new DBS check or renewal.
- To produce sufficient documentation when requested by Democratic Services.

Role of Democratic Services

- To ensure all elected members complete a new DBS check or renewal.
- Maintain a log to review and track renewal dates.
- To report non-compliance to the Monitoring Officer and Group Leader where applicable.

Monitoring Officer Involvement

- When DBS checks are returned, they must be presented to the Monitoring Officer in order to be registered by the council.
- In the case of any offences being revealed on the DBS check, the Monitoring Officer will consider the results of the check and what, if any, impact this will have on the Member being able to undertake specific roles within the council. The Monitoring Officer will discuss this with the Member themselves and if necessary, with the relevant Group Leader to inform their nominations for committees.

Agenda Item 9

Standards Committee

22 September 2025

Employee Code of Conduct

1. Aim

To provide the Standards Committee with an opportunity to review the Employee Code of Conduct and its role in defining and supporting the council's standards of conduct for employees.

2. Summary

2.1 At its meeting on 7 July 2025, the Standards Committee requested a report to review the Employee Code of Conduct, including consideration of whether a higher standard should apply to senior officers of the Council.

2.2 Strategic overview of the Employees' Code of Conduct is within the remit of the Standards Committee.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That Standards Committee note the report.

3.2 That Standards Committee note that the Employee Code of Conduct is a function of Cabinet.

4. Report Detail – Know

4.1 The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to provide a clear framework and guidance for all employees/workers of Walsall Council, which outlines acceptable standards of behaviour and aims to support the council's shared vision, purpose, values and behaviour.

4.2 The Employee Code of Conduct applies to all council employees and workers including those on a casual working agreement and on a temporary agency assignment and is set out in Part 5.2 of the Council's Constitution. The latest version was approved by the Personnel Committee at its meeting held on 24 January 2022 and is attached at **Appendix 1** to the report.

4.3 At its meeting held on 31 January 2023, the Standards Committee received a report which confirmed that the Code of Conduct applied to all officers, including Chief Officers.

4.4 Part 4 of the Code of Conduct for Employees sets out additional accountabilities for Executive Directors and Managers: -

Executive Directors are accountable for;

- Reviewing, signing, recording and maintaining a register of declarations of interest (financial and non-financial) that are submitted by all employees;
- Forwarding all declarations of interest to the council's Monitoring Officer for review and authorising as appropriate.

Managers are accountable for;

- Reviewing and signing any conflict of interest declarations made by employees;
- Ensuring signed conflict of interest forms are submitted to Executive Directors for review and recording.

4.5 The Code of Conduct Declaration of Interest Form is set out at **Appendix 2.** Where an employee who has any financial, private and personal interests with outside organisations or groups which may conflict with their duties, they must declare such involvement for formal recording.

4.6 A benchmarking exercise has been conducted against 16 Councils, and the comparative data is attached at **Appendix 3.**

4.7 Benchmarking against other councils indicates that all maintain a single comprehensive code that is applicable to all officers. Several councils note within their code that it would affect some employees such as senior or managerial, more than others.

4.8 Some Council's specifically include a requirement for senior officers to uphold and promote the Code of Conduct for Employees. A notable example was Derbyshire County Council where senior officers have a duty to implement the code, ensure complaints in relation to the code are investigated appropriately, and must be aware of their own conduct and behaviour and how this can impact on other employees.

4.9 The Monitoring Officer consulted the Council's Independent Persons who are of the view that consideration should be given to whether breaches of the Code of Conduct by senior officers should carry greater weight when determining any resulting determinations or sanctions. Their view is that a breach of the code by a junior officer may have less impact when compared to a breach by a senior officer.

5. Decide

Committee could decide to: -

1. Note the report and the current Code of Conduct for Employees
2. Submit recommendations for revisions to the Code of Conduct for Employees for consideration during the review cycle.

6. Respond

6.1 The Committee is asked to note the report. Should specific recommendations be made with regard to proposed amendments, these will be passed to officers responsible for reviewing the Code of Conduct for Employees. Any revisions to the Code of Conduct would require consideration by Cabinet and a change to the Constitution.

6.2 Any changes to the Constitution would be subject to approval by Council.

7. Review

Employment policies will usually be reviewed on a three yearly cycle, unless legislation or internal organisational prompt an earlier review.

8. Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Legal implications

The approval of the Employee Code of Conduct was a specific function of the Personnel Committee which was disestablished by Council at its meeting on 24 September 2024. As such, the default position set out in section 13(2) of the 2000 Act applies and the power to approve Human Resources Policies and Procedures rests with the Executive.

Author

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Signed
Edwina Adefehinti
Interim Director of Governance
Date: 10 September 2025

Code of Conduct for Employees / Workers

Walsall Council

Version Control

Document title	**Code of Conduct for Employees / Workers**		
Owner	Strategic Human Resource Mngt.	Status	Live
Version	6.0.	Approved on	24/01/2022
Effective from	01/01/2022	Last Updated	30/11/2021
Purpose	The purpose of this code is to provide a clear framework within which employees of the Council are expected to conduct themselves.		

This policy links to:

- Our Council Plan
- Walsall Proud
- Counter-fraud and Corruption Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Media Publicity Protocols
- Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Email and Internet Usage Policy
- Equality and Diversity Protocol
- Flexible-time Scheme
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Gender Reassignment Guidance
- Substance Misuse Policy and guidance notes for managers
- Alcohol and Drugs Testing Policy
- Agile / Blended Working Policy
- Politically Restricted Posts - Guidance
- Workforce Strategy
- Behaviour & Standards Framework
- Health and Safety Policies
- Information Governance Policy Framework
- Menopause Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Performance and Ill Health Capability Policy
- Recovery of Overpayments of Salary Policy
- Domestic Abuse Workplace Guidance
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Section 5.3 of the Constitution on member / officer protocol

This list is not exhaustive.

For further advice or guidance on this policy, or if you would like this information in another language or format please contact:

HR Operational Services Team

Telephone:	01922 655656
Text phone:	01922 654000
Email:	hrdoperationalservices@walsall.gov.uk

FOREWORD

Working in public service places particular responsibility on us and we are expected to maintain excellent levels of conduct at all times.

This Code of Conduct explains how we need to behave so that we can at all times demonstrate honesty and integrity. It also outlines the things we need to do to demonstrate that our actions are impartial and objective, and we maintain transparency and accountability as local government officers.

Our Code of Conduct places a responsibility on every member of staff to act in the best possible interests of the public, to provide excellent services to the people of Walsall and to never bring themselves or the council into disrepute. It also makes clear how we should work with each other and our partners on a day to day basis.

Your first responsibility as a member of staff is to read this document and discuss with your manager any points that may require further clarification. If you manage or supervise staff, you are also responsible for ensuring that the staff who report to you understand the requirements of this Code and operate within it.

It is our collective and individual responsibility to ensure that our conduct is the best it can be at all time. This will enable us to be highly regarded by the people we serve.

……..
Emma Bennett
Chief Executive

Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Walsall Council is PROUD. We are proud of our past, our present and for our future. The council is committed to reducing inequalities and ensuring all potential is maximized and its employment policies, procedures and guidelines are designed to support this vision and deliver the council's priorities.

1.2 The council is committed to creating an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential and this policy provides a framework in which employees will be supported to deliver the council's priorities in line with the council's expected behaviours and values; professionalism; leadership; accountability; transparency and ethical.

1.3 The council's values and behaviours will be at the core of everything the council deliver and through a culture of continuous improvement, the council will increase performance, efficiency and champion the design of services to meet the needs of customers. As a digital by design council, employees will be empowered to deliver new ways of thinking and new ways of working, encouraging innovation and creativity in a learning environment. The council is committed to technological investment to deliver transformation in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, both internally and externally.

1.4 This policy framework promotes the council's strategic priority of internal focus ensuring all council services are effective and efficient and helps embed the behaviours and values expected of all employees as part of the Behaviour and Standards Framework.

1.5 The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to provide a clear framework and guidance for all employees/workers of Walsall Council, which outlines acceptable standards of behaviour and aims to support the council's shared vision, purpose, values and behaviour.

2.0 Scope

2.1 The Code of Conduct applies to all council employees and workers including those on a casual working agreement and on a temporary agency assignment.

3.0 Principles

3.1 The Code of Conduct draws together policies and requirements of the council and aims to assist employees in performing their duties to the best of their ability. All council policies and procedures form part of the Code of Conduct and as such any breach of policies or procedures will be considered a breach of the Code.

3.2 Employees are required to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Code and the documents referred to within it. It cannot cover every eventuality and if in any doubt or any guidance is required, employees should consult their line manager in the first instance or Human Resources.

3.3 A breach of the Code may lead to disciplinary action.

4.0 Accountabilities

Executive Directors are accountable for;

4.1 Reviewing, signing, recording and maintaining a register of declarations of interest (financial and non-financial) that are submitted by all employees;

4.2 Forwarding all declarations of interest to the council's Monitoring Officer for review and authorising as appropriate.

Managers are accountable for;

4.3 Reviewing and signing any conflict of interest declarations made by employees;

4.4 Ensuring signed conflict of interest forms are submitted to Executive Directors for review and recording.

Employees / Workers are accountable for;

4.5 Complying with this code of conduct in accordance with and support of the council's vision and purpose and clearly demonstrating the council's behaviours and values;

4.6 Ensuring that they (and any members of staff they manage) are familiar with this code of conduct and the requirements contained within it;

4.7 Ensuring they declare any potential conflict(s) of interest as appropriate and identified throughout this policy to their line manager and where relevant the Executive Director and the council's Monitoring Officer by completing a declaration of interest form;

4.8 Behaving in a politically impartial manner;

4.9 Ensuring they avoid doing anything that might suggest that their actions are prompted by party political allegiance (in support of or aligned to a particular political party);

4.10 Treating all councillors professionally and without bias, ensuring a working relationship demonstrating mutual respect. Mutual respect between employees and councillors is essential to good local government. Employees

who have or enter into a personal relationship with a councillor must declare this to their line manager and complete a declaration of interest form;

4.11 Treating others with dignity and respect and contribute positively to an inclusive working environment that promotes these values and does not discriminate unlawfully against any person;

4.12 Ensuring that they avoid personal prejudice in giving / refusing any service;

4.13 Providing the highest possible standards of service to the public and appropriate advice to councillors and fellow employees. In carrying out their duties and responsibilities, employees' honesty and integrity must be beyond question. Employees must never use their authority or position for personal gain, or to enable colleagues or others to gain personally;

4.14 Ensuring they adhere to the council's legal obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018 and any other relevant legislation by following the councils information governance policies, procedures, training and standards or guidance to hold information securely in a confidential manner and only ever disclose information where there is a legal justified right and lawful basis to do so;

4.15 Ensuring they do not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled to by law;

4.16 Ensuring they use their discretion to determine the appropriateness of where they hold conversations of a confidential nature, particularly given the range of remote / blended working arrangements in operation. Employees, who view, overhear or otherwise come into contact with private information, must ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times;

4.17 Adhering to the council's social media policy and the information governance policy framework and guidance on using social media, which includes the following;

Members of staff should not:

- Upload images from work
- Bring the council into disrepute
- Ruin the reputation of an individual or the council
- Upload or post defamatory, derogatory or offensive statements about colleagues, customers, service users, their work or the council.

4.18 Ensuring any requirements to post information to social media in the exercising of duties should be in accordance with any communications and or print and design specifications and with appropriate authorisation only in line with the social media policy and information governance policy framework.

5.0 The Code

5.1 Honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity

5.1.1 An employee must perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.

Employees serve the council as a whole and have individual responsibility as part of their jobs for implementing policy, delivery of services and operational management of the council.

It is vital that employees understand that it is not just about reality it is also about public perception. The public has a right to expect the highest levels of integrity and responsibility from all employees. A loss of confidence through public perception is just as critical as any other demonstrable actions.

5.1.2 Political neutrality

All employees, whether or not in a politically restricted post must ensure they follow all council policies and must not allow their personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

Those employees at a senior level, where part of their duties to advise and support councillors, will ensure councillors have appropriate and timely information on key issues and decisions (in line with data protection legislation); and will give councillors independent and professional advice, not influenced by their political views or preferences (refer to section 5.3 of the council's constitution on member / officer protocol).

5.1.3 Politically restricted posts

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 states that posts which are deemed as 'specified posts' or 'sensitive posts' are politically restricted and therefore prevented by law from holding certain political office and from being an officer in a political party as well as taking part in certain political activities. Employees seeking further information should contact their line manager or refer to the politically restricted posts guidance available on the HR intranet pages.

5.2 Accountability

5.2.1 An employee is accountable to the council for their actions and behaviours.

5.2.2 Compliance with legislation, terms and conditions of service and other written policies, procedures and guidelines.

During the course of work employees should at all times be aware of and comply with all relevant legislation; for example the Health and Safety at

Work Act 1974, the Equality Act 2010, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2016 the Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000, The Computer Misuse Act 1990 etc and any other relevant legislation, including that relating to individual service areas. This list is not exhaustive.

Employees should also have read and understood their terms and conditions of employment, including all local policies and procedures, which take into account all legislation and the local and national schemes. These policies and procedures are contained on the council's intranet site, or for further information contact Human Resources.

In addition, employees should be conscious of, and ensure that they are complying with, any other specific guidelines issued by their Service/Directorate Area. If an employee is a member of a professional institute or association they are also obliged to comply with any professional code of conduct, such as accountancy / legal professional bodies, codes of conduct and social care codes of conduct.

5.2.3 Safeguarding

Employees working with children and/or vulnerable adults have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and/or vulnerable adults during the course of their work.

5.2.4 Dress code

Employees should dress appropriately and safely for the work that they do and to meet the expectations of members of the public, customers and stakeholders, irrelevant of work location (i.e. working in council buildings / in the field / remotely at home or another location / a blended or mixed approach). The council reserves the right to set minimum standards of dress for each service area.

5.2.5 Equalities, diversity and inclusion

Council employees have a duty to demonstrate principles of equality, diversity and inclusion across all interactions ensuring compliance with council policies, procedures and relevant legislation. The council adopts a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and will not accept any form of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief (or no religion or belief), sexual orientation, class or social background, political belief or Trade Union affiliation.

We are committed to equal opportunities and aspire to have a diverse workforce, and an inclusive workplace culture, all of which enable better outcomes for our staff and the local citizens we serve.

Employees should refer to the equality and diversity protocol and workforce strategy for further information.

5.3 Respect for others

5.3.1 Employees should always be courteous, professional and helpful when dealing with other people, whether fellow employees, service users, volunteers, customers, members of the public, councillors, contacts at external organisations or other stakeholders.

5.4 Stewardship

5.4.1 All employees must ensure that they use the public funds entrusted to or handled by themselves in a responsible and lawful manner. Employees must not utilise property, vehicles or other council facilities including equipment and materials for personal use unless expressly authorised to do so by their line manager.

5.4.2 Care and use of council resources

All equipment and vehicles belonging to the council should be utilised with due care and attention. Council resources, whether tangible assets such as materials, equipment and cash, or business information such as trade secrets or business contacts, may not be used other than for the proper advancement of the business of the council.

Where a council mobile phone has been issued to an employee / worker, this should be used for official council business only and not personal use. In exceptional circumstances / emergencies where it has been necessary for an employee / worker to use their council issued mobile phone for personal use, the cost of calls/texts must be reimbursed to the council by the employee / worker. The employee / worker is responsible for ensuring any such use is kept to an absolute minimum and for declaring any use to their line manager, these should be properly logged including costs that are due to be reimbursed to the council. The employee is then responsible for confirming in writing (an email is acceptable) to payroll the total amount of reimbursement. Payroll will then deduct the monies owed to the council from the employees / workers next salary payment. The employee should also send a copy of this confirmation / request for deduction to their line manager.

Council vehicles must only be used for authorised purposes and employees should only carry passengers where this is part of their working duties. Unauthorised use of council vehicles will render insurance cover void. In such circumstances, the employee would be personally liable to pay damages in the event of an accident causing injury and/or damage.

5.4.3 Security and use of computer equipment / data

The information technology systems operated by the council and the information stored within is of paramount importance. The GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and the Computer Misuse Act 1990 must be complied with. Employees must ensure that no unauthorised person gains access to equipment / data, which is within their responsibilities. User identifications and passwords must not be released to anyone, and passwords must be regularly changed. No data should be released unless it complies with the requirements of the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The council has no objection to employees using the internet for personal use as long as this is undertaken in their own time (e.g. during lunch breaks or outside of their clocked in working hours) and in accordance with the council's email and internet usage policy, the social media policy and the Computer Misuse Act 1990. The council will monitor the use of computers / internet access on a regular basis.

Employees should refer to the email and internet usage policy, the social media policy and consult Information Governance for further information on the use of computer equipment and data.

5.5 Personal interests

5.5.1 Whilst employees' private lives are their own concern, employees must not allow their personal interests to conflict with their public duty or the requirements of the council. Employees must not misuse their official position or information acquired during the course of their employment to further their private interests or to confer an advantage or disadvantage to any person.

An employee should not put themselves in a position where their job, or the council's interests and their own personal interests conflict. This includes behaviour (including that in an employee's own time), which because of the nature of employment would undermine the council's confidence or trust in the employee or that would bring the council into disrepute.

In particular, employees must comply with the following council requirements in relation to personal and/or conflicting interests;

5.5.2 Gifts and hospitality

The council's gifts and hospitality policy must be adhered to when employees and/or their families are offered any gifts, hospitality or any other benefits by any third parties. All accepted and refused offers of gifts and hospitality must be properly authorised and recorded in a register maintained for this purpose by their Executive Director. For example gifts with a minimum nominal value may be accepted such as pens, diaries and chocolates, however cash should not be accepted. Unacceptable gifts should be politely but where appropriate

firmly refused. Employees should refer to the gifts and hospitality policy and if in any doubt they should contact their line manager for further guidance.

5.5.3 Financial and non-financial interests

Where an employee has any financial, private and personal interests with outside organisations or groups which may conflict with their duties, they must declare such involvement for formal recording and they must not allow it to influence in any way how they carry out their work.

Examples of interests include friendship, membership of an association, organisation or society whether or not receiving grant aid from the council, school governorship, involvement with an organisation or pressure group which may oppose council policies, and any other kind of relationship that could influence their judgement and give the impression that they might be acting from personal motives.

If an employee has a financial or non-financial interest relating to work that they are undertaking at the time, they should cease to deal with this work immediately and ask their manager to assign the work to someone else.

Employees must inform their Executive Director and the Monitoring Officer in writing about any relationship they have with contractors or potential contractors which could be seen as giving them financial gain or advantage. It is a criminal offence to fail to do so under Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1992.

Contracts have to be awarded in accordance with the council's procurement and contract rules, on merit, and following fair competition, except where those rules specify otherwise. No favouritism must be shown to businesses run by friends, partners, relatives or people with whom you have had a previous close working relationship.

If an employee or a member of their family or other person with whom they have a close personal relationship, has a financial interest in a contract that the council has made or is going to make, it must be declared immediately in writing to their Executive Director and the Monitoring Officer.

Similarly, employees should declare any interests such as ownership of land and shares in any relevant company where a conflict of interest might exist. Employees are required to record these interests with their Executive Director and the Monitoring Officer.

If an employee attends a cabinet meeting of the council when a contract in which they have an interest is to be considered, they must report this to the Monitoring Officer or the most senior officer present. It is a legal requirement for employees not to speak on an item for which they have an interest whether at the meeting, in prior briefings to councillors or at any other time.

Employees are required to consult their Executive Director before accepting any company directorship or positions akin to directorships in any limited liability company, including membership of the board of a community association whether such an association that is incorporated as a limited liability company or a registered charity or not. New recruits should also declare any existing directorships/memberships following appointment.

Any financial or non-financial interests should be declared using the Code of Conduct declaration of interest form, available on the HR intranet pages, which must be signed by the employee's line manager and authorised by the Executive Director and the council's Monitoring Officer.

5.5.4 Additional employment

The council will not prevent an employee from undertaking additional employment providing it does not conflict with the interests of, or in any way weaken public confidence in the council and does not in any way affect performance of their duties and responsibilities whilst at work, or where their current position could confer advantage to their private interest / personal gain. If there is a conflict the manager can request that the employee discontinue with their conflicting private business interests.

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety. Employees must inform their manager if they have/take up additional employment, particularly where this means that their total number of hours worked exceed an average of 48 hours per week, or which could have a detrimental effect on their health and safety.

Employees whose salary grade is above G6 are specifically required to obtain written consent from their line manager if they wish to take up any additional employment.

5.5.5 Alcohol / drugs

The council has a substance misuse policy and guidance notes for managers and an alcohol and drugs testing policy, which is aimed at supporting employees and ensuring that they report fit for work and remain fit to perform their duties. All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they report fit for work duties and conduct themselves in a professional manner. Any employee who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol may present a health and safety risk to themselves or others.

The consumption of alcohol on council premises is not permitted, unless approved by the line manager in exceptional circumstances e.g. a particular event such as an awards ceremony.

Management reserve the right to ask an employee to remove themselves from any work locations / duties and take any subsequent and appropriate management action in any event where management feel an employee is

unfit for work due to any substance misuse (including alcohol) or where they may present a risk to themselves or others.

Walsall Council expressly prohibits the use of any illegal drugs or any prescription medicines that have not been prescribed for the user. It is a criminal offence to be in possession of, use or distribute an illicit substance.

Where it is established that there is an alcohol or drug dependency, the council will consider this as a treatable illness and managers will provide assistance and support where possible, including providing access to appropriate support channels. However any continued unacceptable behaviour or performance will be subject to the relevant council policy or procedure.

5.5.6 Criminal offences

Employees are expected to conduct themselves at all times (inside and outside of work) in a manner which will maintain public confidence in both their integrity and the services provided by Walsall Council.

Employees must inform their manager without delay if they are arrested, convicted, cautioned, subject to criminal investigation or formally warned of a crime including notifying their manager of the development and outcome of any ongoing case as soon as it happens. Employees do not need to disclose fixed penalty notices for minor driving offences except where driving is a key requirement of the employees' role or the conviction results in disqualification.

Employees sentenced to immediate imprisonment may be dismissed without notice or compensation in lieu of notice.

5.5.7 Inappropriate access to information

Employees must not access records, documents or files in connection with individuals or clients for which there is no legal justified basis such as accessing records, files or systems in relation to friends, relatives or co-workers. Employees that are requested to undertake any duties on such records must declare a conflict of interest to their manager immediately upon becoming aware of the possible relationship.

This ensures the council remains compliant with the principles of Data Protection and that professional integrity of those concerned remains intact while ensuring service delivery remains un-bias, ethically sound and confidentiality is upheld.

5.6 Reporting procedures: confidential reporting (whistleblowing)

5.6.1 In the event any employee becomes aware of any activities that they believe to be illegal, unethical, improper or otherwise inconsistent with;

- this Code of Conduct;
- the council's constitution;
- the counter-fraud and corruption policy;
- or any other council policy or procedure.

They should report the matter to;

- their line manager in the first instance where applicable or;
- their Head of Service or Director;
- their Executive Director or the Chief Executive where applicable;
- through the council's confidential reporting (whistleblowing) hotline number or;
- any other contact as specified in the confidential reporting (whistleblowing) policy including the council's Monitoring Officer.

5.6.2 Confidential reporting is intended to encourage and enable employees to report serious concerns confidentially regarding the deficiency in the provision of any council service without fear of reprisal or recrimination. Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, employees are legislatively protected in the event they raise any concerns. Employees should refer to the confidential reporting (whistleblowing) policy for further information.

5.7 Reporting procedures: bribery and corruption

5.7.1 The council does not tolerate any form of bribery and corruption. Employees need to be aware that bribing another person or receiving a bribe are serious criminal offences under the Bribery Act 2010 and should refer to the council's counter fraud and corruption policy for further information.

5.8 Openness

5.8.1 Employees should be open about the council's services and how these are provided, including the dissemination of information and decision making, ensuring a transparent culture across the council. However, where certain information is private, sensitive or not appropriate for a wider audience there will be a need for confidentiality. Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone who is not entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions. If in doubt employees should check with their line manager or the Information Governance Team.

In their official capacity, councillors have a general right of access to information held by the council. Where a councillor is seeking to access

personal data relating to an individual, employees are legally obliged to ensure that such requests are handled in line with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 schedule 1, part 2, and the common law duty of confidentiality. Further details of which can be found in the information governance policy framework.

Employees should not use any information obtained during their employment or because of their position as a council employee for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it to others who might use this in such a way.

5.8.2 Media contact

Employees must not make statements to the media, or any other public statement which concerns the business of the council unless they have been authorised by their manager to act generally as a spokesperson or have been expressly authorised to act as a spokesperson in relation to a particular situation, or are acting as an authorised Trade Union spokesperson.

Employees should refer to the council's media publicity protocols for further information.

All media enquiries should be referred to the Communications Team.

Employees authorised to maintain a council social media account should seek guidance and support from the council's Communications Team.

5.9 Appointment of staff

5.9.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that those appointments are made only on the basis of merit. An employee must not be involved in the appointment or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee including agency workers, who is a relative or friend. The onus is on the employee to declare those people they would define as a 'friend' using their own personal judgement in accordance with the spirit of this Code, in particular honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.

5.9.2 In the above, 'relative' means a spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, step-daughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, cousin or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons; and 'partner' above means a member of a couple who live together.

5.10 Duty of trust

5.10.1 An employee must, at all times act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them and demonstrate the expected standards, behaviours and values of the council, refer to 1.2.

5.10.2 Employees are reasonably expected to be ready and able at the agreed times of working to carry out their job.

5.10.3 Politeness and courtesy should be expressed to the public and to internal and external clients at all times.

5.10.4 Customer care and courtesy must be maintained with appropriate professional boundaries and particular attention should be paid when in contact with children and/or vulnerable adults.

5.10.5 In carrying out their duties and responsibilities employees' honesty and integrity should be beyond question.

CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATION OF INTEREST FORM

When completed return this form directly to your Executive Director, who will forward this information to the Monitoring Officer.

Paragraph 5.5.3 Financial and non-financial interests (as amended)
Employees must inform their Executive Director and the Monitoring Officer in writing about any relationship they have with contractors or potential contractors which could be seen as giving them financial gain or advantage. It is a criminal offence to fail to do so under Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1992.
Extract of requirement to disclose (from Employee Code of Conduct) (as amended)
Where an employee has any financial, private and personal interests with outside organisations or groups which may conflict with their duties, they must declare such involvement for formal recording and they must not allow it to influence in any way how they carry out their work. Examples of interests include friendship, membership of an association, organisation or society whether or not receiving grant aid from the council, school governorship, involvement with an organisation or pressure group which may oppose council policies, and any other kind of relationship that could influence their judgement and give the impression that they might be acting from personal motives. If an employee has a financial or non-financial interest relating to work that they are undertaking at the time, they should cease to deal with this work immediately and ask their manager to assign the work to someone else. Employees must immediately inform their Executive Director and the Monitoring Officer in writing about any relationship they have with contractors or potential contractors which could be seen as giving them financial gain or advantage. It is a criminal offence to fail to do so under Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1992. Contracts have to be awarded in accordance with the council's procurement and contract rules, on merit, and following fair competition, except where those rules specify otherwise. No favouritism must be shown to businesses run by friends, partners, relatives or people with whom you have had a previous close working relationship. If an employee or a member of their family or other person with whom they have a close personal relationship, has a financial interest in a contract that the council has made or is going to make, it must be declared immediately in writing to their Executive Director and the Monitoring Officer. Similarly, employees should declare any interests such as ownership of land and shares in any relevant company where a conflict of interest might, or be perceived to, exist. Employees are required to record these interests with their Executive Director and the Monitoring Officer. If an employee attends a cabinet meeting of the council when a contract in which they have an interest is to be considered, they must report this to the Monitoring Officer or the most senior officer present. It is a legal requirement for employees not to speak

on an item for which they have an interest whether at the meeting, in prior briefings councillors or at any other time.

Employees are required to consult their Directors before accepting any company directorship or positions akin to directorship in any limited liability company, including membership of the borad of a community association whether such an association that is incorporated as a limited liability company or a registered charity or not. New recruits should also declare any existing directorships/memberships following appointment.

Any financial or non-financial interests should be declared using the Code of Conduct declaration of interest form, which must be signed by the employee's line manager and authorised by the Executive Director and the council's Monitoring Officer.

Details of disclosure/declaration (complete as necessary)	
Reason for disclosure:	
Relationship:	
Contractor name & address:	
Employee financial interest:	
Employee non-financial interest:	
Family or other persons financial or non-financial interest (including nature of relationship with employee)	
I, the below signed, being an employee of Walsall Council wish to disclose the above information.	
Name of employee:	
Position:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Name of line manager:	
Position:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Please return this form to your Executive Director.

Name of Executive Director:	
Position:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Once signed please forward to the council's Monitoring Officer.

Name of Monitoring Officer:	
Position:	
Signed:	
Date:	

A completed copy of the signed form should be placed on personnel files – send to HRDScanning@walsall.gov.uk

Code of Conduct Benchmarking

Council	Scope of Code of Conduct	Additional expectations for senior officers
Walsall Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code of Conduct applies to all council employees and workers including those on a casual working agreement and on a temporary agency assignment.	**Part 4.6 Officer Employment Procedure Rules** Requires candidates to declare if they are related to an existing Councillor or officer of the council. **Part 4.7 Financial rules** Paragraph 1.5 - Officers' interest in contracts As soon as any officer becomes aware that they, a family member or friend has any personal or prejudicial interest in any contract or other matter pertaining to the Council's affairs, the officer shall declare this in writing to the Monitoring Officer. This shall be done in accordance both with these rules and with the requirements of the Council's code of conduct for its employees. Paragraph 5.4 – Preventing fraud and corruption Each Directorate shall maintain a register of officers' interests and of any gifts or hospitality received by them, which are declared in accordance with this paragraph. Paragraph 8.3 – Ordering and paying for work, goods and services Every officer and member of the authority has a responsibility to declare any links or personal interests that they may have with purchasers, suppliers and/or contractors if they are engaged in contractual or purchasing decisions on behalf of the Council, in accordance with appropriate codes of conduct. **Employee Code of Conduct** The council will not prevent an employee from undertaking additional employment providing it does not conflict with the interests of, or in any way weaken public confidence in the council and does not in any way affect performance of their

		duties and responsibilities whilst at work, or where their current position could confer advantage to their private interest / personal gain. If there is a conflict the manager can request that the employee discontinue with their conflicting private business interests. Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety. Employees must inform their manager if they have/take up additional employment, particularly where this means that their total number of hours worked exceed an average of 48 hours per week, or which could have a detrimental effect on their health and safety. Employees whose salary grade is above G6 are specifically required to obtain written consent from their line manager if they wish to take up any additional employment.
Wolverhampton City Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code applies to all local government employees in Wolverhampton. Inevitably some of the issues covered by the Code will affect senior, managerial and professional employees more than it will others. The Code is intended to cover all employees under a contract of employment within the Council, including office holders such as registrars.	
Dudley Council Link to CoC for Employees	The code of conduct covers all employees (employees for the purposes of this code of conduct means any worker, contractor, interim, consultant, agency worker, apprentice, work experience, volunteer or partner whether permanent or temporary) who are either employed or are engaged to provide services to Dudley Council.	The Code of Conduct contains the following points that are applicable to senior officers: - All leaders and managers are responsible for the application of this code of conduct in their area of work. They must ensure the code is adhered to and will: • Be a role model of the required standards of behaviour; • Reinforce the required standards of behaviour through appropriate communications within their teams;

		• Explain the provisions of the code to promote understanding; • Coach, support and provide feedback to employees on their performance and define what is expected and deal with concerns about the work and conduct; • Actively promote and robustly support and be willing to take appropriate action at the earliest opportunity to deal with non-compliance with the standards of the code.
Sandwell Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code applies to all employees of the Council, although, inevitably, some of the issues covered by the Code will affect some employees more than it will others.	
Birmingham City Council Link to CoC for Employees	Birmingham City Council's Code of Conduct forms part of the Contract of Employment. It aims to establish the usual standard of conduct expected of all employees. The Code of Conduct's principles reflects BCC's values and behaviours setting down the way in which you, as an employee of the Council, are expected to conduct yourself.	
Bolton Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code applies to all Council employees. Inevitably some of the issues covered by the code will affect senior, managerial and professional employees more than it will others.	5.3.2 The individual rights of all Councillors must be respected. On occasions senior officers may be requested to advise or brief political groups. They must make their Chief Officer aware, through their Head of Service, and seek advice to ensure that they do this in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality.
Derbyshire County Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code applies to all employees of the Council together with those working on behalf of the Council such as relief workers and apprentices.	The Code of Conduct contains the following points that are applicable to senior officers: - • Have a duty to implement this Code of Conduct in a fair and equitable way and to ensure that the employees they are responsible for understand and adhere to it

		• Have a duty to ensure that any complaints raised in relation to this Code are investigated appropriately, and that complainants are not penalised as a result of making a complaint. • Must be aware of their own conduct and behaviour and how this can impact on other employees. • Should demonstrate behaviours in line with the Council's People Priorities, including promoting diversity and inclusion, commitment to the engagement, nurturing and development of their teams, and supporting the wellbeing of their staff and be committed to any Council strategies designed to support this. • Support their staff to deliver their roles in the most effective way.
Doncaster County Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code applies equally to all employees regardless of position, grade, and length of service or terms of employment. This code can also apply to employees in schools where the governing body has delegated powers, if the Code has been adopted by the governing body.	The following extracts are taken from Part 5, Section 3 of the Code of Conduct for Employees (each section also contains further detailed points not listed here). 5.2 Managers must support good employment practice by … 5.3 Managers must ensure that training and development opportunities are in place to strengthen and develop skills and knowledge by … 5.4 Managers must ensure that the performance of employees is managed by… 5.5 Managers must ensure that employees are made aware of written policies, procedures and good practice by … 5.6 Managers must ensure that they recognise that they are responsible for the work that they have delegated to others by … 5.7 Managers must promote this code of conduct by …

Oldham Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code of Conduct covers all staff employed by the Council. The Members Code of Conduct is in place to guide the standards and behaviours of Members.	On occasions senior officers may be requested to advise or brief political groups. In this instance you must make your Chief Officer aware and seek advice to ensure that this is done in a way which does not compromise political neutrality. **Leadership** Those undertaking leadership roles are responsible for the delivery of high quality providing positive influence, supporting and demonstrating trust in staff and modelling the ethical behaviours needed from their teams. Managers are responsible for ensuring clarity of role and monitoring performance.
Rotherham Council Link to CoC for Employees	The purpose of this code is to promote consistency and make all employees aware of their responsibilities whilst engaged in work for the Council, by specifying standards of behaviour and by clearly defining rules concerning official conduct.	
St Helens Borough Council Link to CoC for Employees	This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of St Helens Borough Council except schools based employees for which a separate code exists. The Code extends to secondees from outside the Council and agency/consultancy staff, who will be expected to familiarise themselves with the content of the Code of Conduct and undertake their duties in compliance with it. It applies to employee's conduct both within the Council and when dealing with other organisations as a representative of the Council and applies to an employee's conduct outside of work if such conduct could lead to a loss of trust in an individual as an employee.	All members of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, Senior Leadership Team and specified posts must make an annual declaration of any personal interests they may have. All employees in these posts will be expected to make a declaration even if it is simply to formally state that they have no interests to declare. Registration of personal or business interests should be recorded on the Registration of Personal or Business Interests form.

	The Code of Conduct forms part of an employee's contract of employment. Failure to comply with its contents may result in disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.	
Stoke-on-Trent City Council Link to CoC for Employees	If you are an employee of the City Council, irrespective of your position, then this Code of Conduct applies to you. The only exception to this is where you work in a school covered by LMS provisions and your governing body has not adopted this Code for all or some groups of staff working at the school.	
Sunderland City Council Link to CoC for Employees	The aim of this Code is to assist employees achieve the required standards by setting out clearly what is required. This should help employees to protect their own integrity, the integrity of the Council, and to ensure the confidence of the public is retained.	Senior officers are required to disclose to the Chief Executive on the Employee Code of Conduct Declaration Form any relationship known to exist between them and any person who they know is a candidate for an appointment with the Council.
Wakefield Council Link to CoC for Employees	This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of the Council (including Centrally Employed Teachers) and also to apprentices, casual workers, agency workers, contractors and volunteers. … Some of the issues covered by this Code of Conduct will affect senior and managerial employees more than it will others. However, it covers all employees who have an employment contract with Wakefield Council, including relief and casual	

	employees, and as such it forms part of their conditions of service.	
Wigan Council Link to CoC for Employees	This Code of Conduct applies to all council employees. A separate Code of Conduct for Members is also available. Some standards covered by the Code will affect some employees more than others and they will be applied as appropriate. Individuals contracted to provide services for the council, such as agency workers, should comply with the principles of the code, although they are not designated as employees. Although the code is comprehensive in the range of issues included it is not possible to cover every circumstance. Management reserve the right to take appropriate action should any issue arise not otherwise covered in the code.	
City of London Link to CoC for Employees	The Code of Conduct (the 'Code') applies to all employees and other workers (including casual workers, agency workers and consultants)1 and their conduct both within the organisation and when dealing with other organisations as a representative of the City of London Corporation.	Senior management are required to make disclosures or confirm a nil return on a wider range of categories than employees and other workers; this is in line with their responsibilities for the activities of the City Corporation, its workforce and for advising Members on the potential implications of political decisions.

Essex County Council Link to CoC for Employees	The Code of Conduct defines the responsibilities and standards required of all who work for and on behalf of ECC, including interims, agency workers and ECC employees who are seconded to other organisations.	Responsibilities when managing others As a manager, your leadership skills are key elements to your role. You must: • maintain an environment of respect, recognition and support and to induct all new employees to their role • make appointments only on the basis of merit and capability to carry out the role • make sure decisions relating to discipline, promotion and pay are objectively justified • identify and assess all risks and ensure they are managed appropriately • ensure business continuity arrangements are in place to enable continued delivery of services • exercise a duty of care to employees and customers, ensuring health and safety requirements are met. You must not: • be involved in a selection process or interview if you are related to an applicant or in a personal relationship with them or a member of their immediate family.

Standards Committee

22 September 2025

Standards Committee Annual Report 2024/25

1. Summary of report

This is the annual report to Council outlining the work of the Standards Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year.

2. Recommendation

That the Standards Committee comment on and approve the annual report for submission to Council.

3. Report detail – Know

3.1 The Standards Committee is responsible for the promotion and maintaining of high standards of behaviour within the Authority, helping to oversee the adoption, revision and operation of the Code of Conduct. The Standards Committee advises on the training of Councillors and conducts hearings to determine complaints against Councillors and Co-opted Members.

3.2 The Standards Committee is not required to produce an annual report, however, it is good practice to do so.

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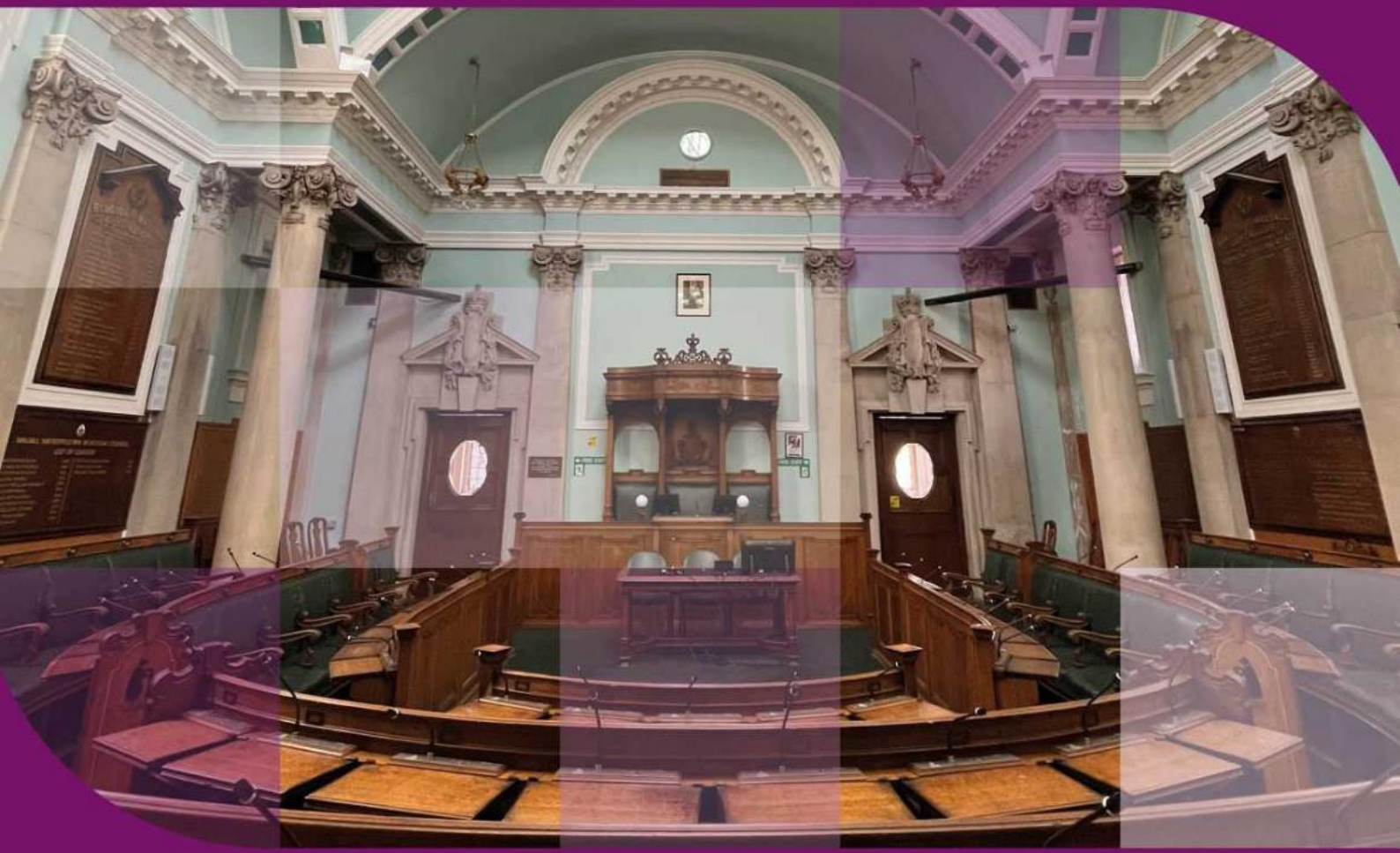
Standards Committee Annual Report 2024/25



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

The Seven Principles of Public Life – "The Nolan Principles"

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

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Foreword by Councillor Gill, Chair of the Standards Committee

I am pleased to present the first Standards Committee Annual Report, setting out the Committee's work during 2024/25 and reaffirming our commitment to the Nolan Principles. We look forward to continuing this commitment to reporting each year on our work, with the introduction of this annual report, to uphold the highest standards of conduct. I also look forward to building on the standards matters newsletter as we look to reintroduce it on a quarterly basis as part of our ongoing efforts to keep members informed on the latest news in relation to standards.

I would like to take the opportunity to sincerely thank the previous Chair, Councillor Martin, whose leadership - particularly on improving the uptake of criminal record checks - has left us in a strong position, one that I will endeavour to build on. I would also like to formally thank former members of the Committee for the firm foundations they have built, and on behalf of committee members past and present - acknowledge and offer our thanks to Councillor Martin for her professional support to the Committee.

During the year the committee completed a review of the Councillor Code of Conduct and guidance on registering and declaring interests. Council approved clearer guidance, including a dispensation protocol and practical case studies, now reflected in the Constitution to support members in meeting their obligations.

Our culture of integrity has been strengthened as member DBS compliance continued to improve as well as a refresh of the Whistleblowing Policy.

The Committee also engaged with the Government's consultation on strengthening the local government standards framework and encouraged participation by members and Independent Persons.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, our programme includes Member learning and development programme, the Employee Code of Conduct, continued oversight of Ombudsman matters and Whistleblowing, the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign, and ongoing monitoring of DBS compliance and related constitutional updates.

My thanks go to all current Committee Members and to our Independent Persons for making a commitment to this group and its goals. I am sure their diligence and constructive challenge will be applied throughout this year. We will continue to uphold high standards in service of public trust and confidence.

Councillor Poonam Gill
Chair of the Standards Committee

The Role of the Standards Committee

The Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority and the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer are at the heart of the standards framework. They promote, educate and support elected members in following the highest standards of conduct and ensuring that those standards are fully owned locally.

In discharging its duty, the Council must formally adopt a code of conduct, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011. Part 5.1 of the Constitution sets out the Councillor Code of Conduct for which the Standards Committee has oversight, including its adoption, revision and operation.

The Council has in place appropriate arrangements under which allegations that an elected member of co-opted member of the authority, or of a committee or Sub-Committee of the Council, have failed to comply with the Council's Member Code of Conduct can be determined. The Standards Committee is tasked with setting out these arrangements.

The current remit of the Standards Committee is set out in part 3.2 of the Councils Constitution and states that the Committee will discharge the following functions:

(1) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, and voting co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives.

(2) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillor Code of Conduct.

(3) Assisting Councillors and voting co-opted members (and Church and Parent Governor representatives) to observe the Councillor Code of Conduct.

(4) Monitoring the operation of the Councillor Code of Conduct.

(5) Advising on the training and development of Councillors, voting co-opted members (and Church and Parent Governor representatives) generally and on matters relating to the Councillors Code of Conduct. Monitoring training undertaken by Councillors.

(6) Dealing with all other functions under the relevant provisions of, or Regulations made under, the Localism Act 2011. Including the legislation and functions assigned by the Localism Act 2011, and subsequent regulations, in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other significant interests.

(7) To appoint hearing sub-committees of 4 elected members to hear and determine complaints against Members and Co-opted Members under the provisions of the Councillor Code of Conduct, and in accordance with locally agreed procedures.

(8) To make recommendations to Council on the appointment of an Independent Person as required under the Localism Act 2011 and any relevant Regulations and make recommendations to Council in relation to remuneration of Independent Members.

(9) Other functions relating to standards of conduct of Members assigned to Standards Committees under any Act.

(10) Strategic overview of the Employees' Code of Conduct and the Whistleblowing policy.

(11) Overview of the conduct, culture and behaviour element of reports from external auditors, the Local Government Ombudsman, other regulatory reports and inspections.

(12) Approving and revising the Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints about Councillors which sets out the detailed procedures for determining complaints made against Councillors and Co-opted Members under the Councillor Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer holds a statutory role under s.5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and has an enhanced role related to the Council's Standards Committee under the Local Government Act 2000. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that every decision made by the council is made lawfully.

A key function of the Monitoring Officer is their role in upholding the highest standards of conduct for members, and they are responsible for establishing and maintaining a register of member's interests and administering the Council's Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for assessing and receiving every complaint received under the Code of Conduct. After consultation with an Independent Person, they will take a decision as to whether the complaint merits formal investigation. In considering whether to investigate, they will also consider whether the matter should be referred to a hearing sub-committee.

The Committee's Work in 2024/25

The Committee's Membership for 2024/25 included Councillors Andrew, Bashir, Follows*, I. Hussain, Jukes*, Larden, Martin, Mehmi*, Rasab*, Samra, and Sears, together with Independent Persons Andy Green, Deborah Mardner, and Carl Magness.

**Served on the Standards Committee for part of the municipal year.*

The Standards Committee met four times during the 2024/25 municipal year. Councillor Martin served as Chair for all four meetings. Councillor Jukes served as Vice-Chair for the first meeting and Councillor Burley for the remainder.

Member Criminal Record Checks

As part of its work, the Standards Committee placed strong emphasis on ensuring a high uptake in criminal record checks by elected members. Dependent on their committee membership, Members are asked to complete a basic disclosure or an enhanced DBS check (adults and/or children's) every four years.

An update report was received at each meeting in the 2024/25 municipal year regarding the uptake amongst members and the figures presented to each meeting are set out in the table below.

Meeting Date	Number of members with a valid DBS check	Number of members with a valid DBS check but required to undertake a new check*
15 July 2024	52	30
30 September 2024	53	11
27 January 2025	55	9
22 April 2025	56	8

**These members have undertaken a DBS check within the last four years and hold a valid certificate. However, due to a change in role or committee membership, they require a new enhanced check to cover adults and/or children's.*

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review 2023/24

The Standards Committee received a report which provided information on the number and range of complaints referred by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) to the Council during the financial year 2023/24.

It was highlighted that overall, the Ombudsman received 56 complaints relating to Walsall Council in 2023/24, down by 3 from 2022/23. There was an increase in the percentage of complaints that were fully investigated by the Ombudsman that were upheld compared to 2022/23 which mirrored a national trend.

Conduct of Councillors in Meetings

At its meeting on 30 September 2024, the Standards Committee received a report on elected member behavior at meetings of Council. Members considered a draft informal protocol, regarding the conduct of Members during meetings, and requested the Monitoring Officer to consult with Group Leaders.

The Committee received an update from the Monitoring Officer at its meeting on 22 April 2025. The Standards Committee observed that concerns had been raised by Group Leaders regarding the potential for an informal protocol to conflict with the Council's Code of Conduct, which already encompasses provisions to address inappropriate conduct during meetings. Standards agreed, noting that further training would be provided for Chairs to manage meetings effectively. Training is scheduled to be held on 13 November 2025.

Disclosable and non-disclosable interests Working Group

At its meeting held on 30 September 2025, the Standards Committee established a Working Group to review disclosable and non-disclosable interests. The Working Group was Chaired by Independent Person Andy Green, with Councillor Martin as Vice-Chair. The Working Group met on three occasions and made several recommendations to Standards Committee which were subsequently approved by Council at its meeting held on 10 June 2025.

As part of the recommendations, relevant guidance contained within the Councillor Code of Conduct was improved to assist members in understanding their duty to disclose, register and manage their interests. New guidance was introduced including a dispensation protocol, interests flow chart and cycle and case studies.

The report to Council can be viewed here: Annual Meeting of the Council

Whistleblowing policy update

At its meeting on 27 January 2025 the Standards Committee approved a refreshed Whistleblowing Policy. The revised policy had been streamlined to ensure it was easier to follow and aligned with best practice.

The Committee was notified that the authority joined Protect, an organisation offering guidance, support, and best practices regarding whistleblowing procedures.

Government Consultation in relation to strengthening standards.

During the 2024/25 municipal year, the Government launched a consultation in relation to strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England. The Committee considered a report at its meeting on 27 January 2025 and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that elected members and Independent Persons had been notified of the consultation and encouraged to participate.

Future work of the Committee 2025/26

The Committee's membership for 2025/26 includes Councillors Andrew, Bashir, Burley, Ferguson, Follows, Gill, K. Hussain, Jukes, Larden, and Sears together with Independent Persons Andy Green, Deborah Mardner, and Carl Magness.

Councillor Gill is the Chair of the Committee and Councillor Jukes is Vice-Chair.

The work programme for 2025/26 was agreed by Standards Committee at its first meeting of the municipal year, held on 7 July 2025 and the following areas are to be considered: -

- Member criminal record checks and the Constitution.
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report
- Member Learning and Development Programme
- Training brochure and Member hub
- Code of Conduct for Employees

- Monitoring Officer Annual Report in respect of Complaints
- Local Government Association “Debate Not Hate” Campaign
- Committee on Standards in Public Life recommendations
- Annual report regarding Whistleblowing

Independent Persons – Biographies

Independent Person(s) must be consulted by the Authority before it makes a decision on a matter that has been referred to it for investigation. They can also be consulted by the Authority in respect of a code of conduct complaint at any other stage and can also be consulted by a member or co-opted member of the Authority against whom a complaint has been made.

The Council has appointed three Independent Persons who are invited to attend all meetings of the Standards Committee, their biographies are detailed below.

Andy Green

Andy Green was first appointed as Independent Person to the Standards Committee on 17 November 2014.

Andy Green is the Independent Chair of the Audit Committee.

As a former NHS Director with responsibility for corporate governance, Andy brings a wealth of knowledge and experience of the key "Nolan" principles which have underpinned the development of the required standards of conduct and behaviour required of those working within public services. He is committed to continuing his support of the Council by providing independent, objective and constructive advice and challenge in his role as Independent Person.

Carl Magness

Carl Magness was first appointed as Independent Person to the Standards Committee on 25 February 2021.

Carl Magness’s career began in criminal investigations, with over 10 years in benefit fraud at several Local Authorities and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). That culminated in Carl managing the Wolverhampton DWP Local Service Fraud and Error Team, where his 10 investigators handled all welfare benefit fraud allegations in the jurisdiction.

In the last 8 years Carl has worked at a few different public sector regulators, ensuring compliance with standards. Carl presently works with the Regulator of Social Housing ensuring housing providers meet the governance, financial viability and consumer standards.

Deborah Mardner Independent Person to the Standards Committee Deborah Mardner was first appointed as Independent Person to the Standards Committee on 25 February 2021.
Deborah Mardner is an accomplished education professional with over 25 years of experience in primary teaching and senior leadership. She currently holds the position of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead in a large secondary school, where she is responsible for providing safeguarding support, managing referrals, and liaising with external agencies to ensure the welfare and protection of pupils. Beyond her professional role, Deborah serves as a Governor at a local primary school, and a panel member for Wolverhampton Council's Schools Appeal Panel. Deborah's motivation and commitment in becoming an Independent Person for Walsall Council's Standards Committee, is to support elected local councillors in upholding the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and public confidence, as well as safeguarding the reputation of the council. Beyond her professional and voluntary commitments, Deborah has a keen interest in walking and exploring heritage sites, where she draws inspiration from history and culture.

Helpful Contacts

Councillor Gill, Chair of Standards Committee	Cllr.Poonam.Gill@walsall.gov.uk
Edwina Adefehinti, Interim Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer	monitoringofficer@walsall.gov.uk
Sarah Read, Senior Legal Support Officer	Sarah.Read@walsall.gov.uk
Luke Cook, Democratic Services Officer	Luke.Cook@walsall.gov.uk
Democratic Services	DemocraticServices@walsall.gov.uk

Resources and Transformation
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Walsall Council
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Standards Committee

22 September 2025

Member Learning and Development

1. Aim

To allow elected Members to review and feedback on the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2025/26.

2. Summary

To assist in the delivery of their roles, an extensive Member Learning and Development Programme has been developed and refined over recent years. Elected Members are required to undertake at least 12 hours of learning or development each municipal year. An updated Member Learning and Development Programme is attached to this report to allow elected members to feedback and comment on range of learning and development available to ensure that it is fit for purpose and meeting their needs.

3. Recommendation

That Members review and provide feedback on the Member Learning and Development Programme 2025/26.

4. Report Detail – Know

4.1 The purpose of training is to equip individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to meet the organisation's needs in relation to its strategic priorities. By investing in people, through their training, we ensure we harness their full potential and focus their energies on the needs of the organisation while fulfilling their need for personal development and job/role satisfaction.

4.2 The council recognise that such development is a continuing process for both employees and elected members in order to equip them with the necessary skills to fulfil their roles as community leaders, and to help them manage the changes facing the council going forward in delivering its aims and objectives as outlined in the Council Plan 2025-2029.

4.3 Training and development for Councillors should be based on individual needs as well as organisational requirements. Councillors have a key role in meeting these challenges both as the strategic leaders of the council as an organisation and also in providing leadership to their local communities and places. Meeting these challenges at the local level will require councillors to transform both their organisations and change the way they relate to their

communities and places both individually and collectively. Yet if councillors are to play their part they need to be effective in their roles. The council's processes supporting them also need to be appropriate and relevant to their needs.

4.4 The council formed a project team comprising officers from HRD and Legal and Democratic Services with the objective of reviewing approaches to and content of elected member training, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and supports the council's transformation ambitions. It is important that the training offered is relevant to councillors in enabling them to be effective in their role. In keeping the training programme for elected members under review we have sought to hear the Member voice via feedback received during focus groups and through other routes. The focus groups have been well attended since 2017 with elected members making an invaluable contribution to their programme. The focus group last met on 6th June 2023.

4.5 Feedback from Members of the Standards Committee to advise and make suggestions on how the training and development of Councillors and voting co-opted members could be improved is welcomed.

4.6 Options for future information sharing will be explored with the aim of supporting members' access to useful documents, guidance, and training resources, making best use of the technology available to disseminate information.

5. Financial information

None directly related to this report, however, on occasions the council will commission external training, but this cost will be met from within existing budgets.

6. Legal implications

6.1 In maintaining up to date policies and procedures the council will ensure that services are delivered fairly in an open and transparent manner. There are specific requirements in both codes that elected members and officers observe requirements for equalities, diversity and inclusion. EDI training will be made available to all elected members as part of this programme.

6.2 An effective training programme should aim to improve elected member performance and improve governance.

6.3 Training should also increase elected members understanding of the complexity of their role and improve their ability to fulfil the role. This in turn may further reduce the level of complaints that are submitted under the code of conduct.

7. Decide

Subject to any feedback Members may wish to provide the Member Learning and Development Programme will be delivered during the municipal year.

8. Respond

Additions to the Member Learning and Development Programme will be made mid-year as required.

9. Review

9.1 The council's Monitoring Officer will liaise with the Member Learning Champions to work with all elected members to ensure that they have the opportunity to attend at least 12 hours of learning and development each municipal year.

9.2 It is also proposed that the Standards Committee continue to review the content and effectiveness of the training programme for elected members on an annual basis to ensure that it is relevant to the role and of value to elected members. Training should also help the council maintain and improve governance and standards.

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Elected Members
Learning and Development Programme
2025-26

Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST, OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

Learning and Development

'Making a positive difference'

This Programme has been compiled by Democratic Services with support from the Learning and Development Team within Human Resources. It includes development opportunities that aim to support our Elected Members to carry out their roles, making a positive difference to the lives of Walsall residents.

Our commitment to Elected Member development

'We recognise the important role our Elected Members play in establishing and delivering the ambitions of our corporate plan. We recognise their professionalism and commitment to delivering quality services in increasingly challenging financial circumstances. In order to support the Council's core purpose of serving the people and communities of Walsall by representing and working with them to protect and improve the quality of life for all, particularly the most vulnerable, we need to ensure that our Elected Members, like our workforce, are effectively supported and appropriately skilled and trained to fulfil their increasingly challenging roles.

This Programme has been designed with this in mind. We know there is a direct link between an organisation's investment in its people and how well the organisation performs. Our elected members will be the key to leading the Council's overarching priorities including its transformation ambitions and to its overall success'.

Growth for all people, communities and businesses

Increased independence, improved wellbeing

Children have the best possible start in life and are safe from harm

Communities are prospering and resilient

Edwina Adefehinti, Director of Governance

Introduction

This programme is aimed at promoting learning and development opportunities for Walsall Council's Elected Members.

Here in Walsall we are committed to:

- Identifying the individual and collective learning needs of our Elected Members and prioritising them accordingly
- Ensuring that any learning programmes reflect Council and national objectives
- Promoting learning and development opportunities through traditional and electronic communication methods
- Disseminating learning and development to Members within each political group in a timely fashion
- Monitoring the implementation of the Annual Learning and Development Plan for Elected Members and reporting take up to Standards Board/individual Groups
- Evaluating learning and development programmes and reviewing the outcomes
- Practicing accessibility, promoting equality and valuing diversity

We believe Member development is essential if local government is to thrive and prosper. This programme is designed to build Elected Member capacity and is therefore based upon the principles of:

- Developing Electing Members as effective community leaders
- Adopting a strategic approach to Member development which has the backing of all parties
- Having a Development programme in place that clearly identifies the difference development can make
- Ensuring that learning and development is effective in building capacity
- Addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship

Members are encouraged to share their knowledge and expertise with fellow Members, where appropriate, by:

- Supporting newly elected Members (through mentoring)
- Sharing knowledge from attendance at courses, external conferences and seminars
- Engaging in peer mentoring

The role of Democratic Services

Democratic Services provides professional advice, guidance and support to officers and Elected Members (Councillors) including the identification of Members' learning needs. They administer the Programme and are the key point of contact in respect of booking onto face to face learning opportunities and initial resolution of any difficulties members may have with accessing their One Source Learn account.

Democratic Services support Members by:

- Ensuring all Members are aware of learning and development opportunities in a timely manner
- Devising and delivering a programme of induction training for newly elected and returning Members, including 1 to 1 support
- Devising a personal learning and development programme for individual members, upon request, based on needs identified at a personal review meeting with a Peer Member or a Senior Officer.
- Providing administrative support for all learning and development events including communication, bookings, evaluations and feedback requirements

Contacts in Democratic Services:

Edwina Adefehinti	Director – Governance	
	Email	edwina.adefehinti@walsall.gov.uk
	Telephone	01922 654822 or through MS Teams
Sarah Read	Senior Legal Support Officer	
	Email	sarah.read@walsall.gov.uk
	Telephone	01922 654824 or through MS Teams
Neil Picken	Principal Democratic Services Officer	
	Email	neil.picken@walsall.gov.uk
	Telephone	01922 654369 or through MS Teams
Craig Goodall	Principal Democratic Services Officer	
	Email	craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk
	Telephone	01922 654765 or through MS Teams

The role of the Learning and Development Team

The team, led by Jacky Matthews, Head of Organisational Development, are committed to providing high quality learning and development solutions that are pragmatic and innovative and offer value for money. The Team aims to provide a responsive service that reflects the needs of the organisation, as articulated in the Council Plan and the various Directorate plans, supporting staff and Elected Members to achieve the council's goals in challenging times.

The team develops learning programmes that are available to the whole council workforce, including Elected Members (corporate/core training) as well as specific learning programmes for the Adult Social Care Workforce and for Elected Members.

Responding to new initiatives and identified learning needs, the team will continually review its offer and introduce new learning opportunities as appropriate, either face-to-face or as a self-paced elearning package.

Contacts in Learning and Development

Jack Matthews Head of Organisational Development

Email jacky.matthews@walsall.gov.uk
Telephone 01922 653862 or through MS Teams

Or through the generic L&D Mailbox – learninganddevelopment@walsall.gov.uk

What you will find in this document

The learning opportunities in this Programme have been developed or commissioned to meet the changing needs of the organisation and the increasingly demanding roles of our elected members. Opportunities will be continually reviewed and evaluated to assess their relevance and value for money, and unless stated under 'target audience' are open to all elected members.

Some learning events are designed as development workshops aimed at equipping Members with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles, while others might take the form of briefings, 1-to-1s or facilitated sessions whereby Members can share their knowledge and experience.

Our catalogue of elearning is available on the council's One Source Learn platform, which can be accessed outside of normal hours thereby offering maximum flexibility to learners. Support on how to access the platform is available from Democratic Services.

Elected Member Induction

A comprehensive induction programme is available for all members, whether newly elected or returning Members. In addition to the New Member Training facilitated by Democratic Services, there will also be the opportunity to meet with other Members and key senior officers to learn more about corporate and constitutional processes.

Each Member will be provided with an Induction Pack setting out the support and guidance available, together with other useful information about the Council. They will also be allocated an appropriate member colleague as a buddy/mentor.

To complement the Member induction programme, the e-learning package – 'Your role as Councillor' should also be completed. This is available on the One Source platform.

The Induction Process will help to identify any gaps in members' skills or knowledge which need to be developed. This information will then form the basis of a development plan to accompany the recommended and mandatory learning set out in this brochure.

Core Annual Learning and Development Programme

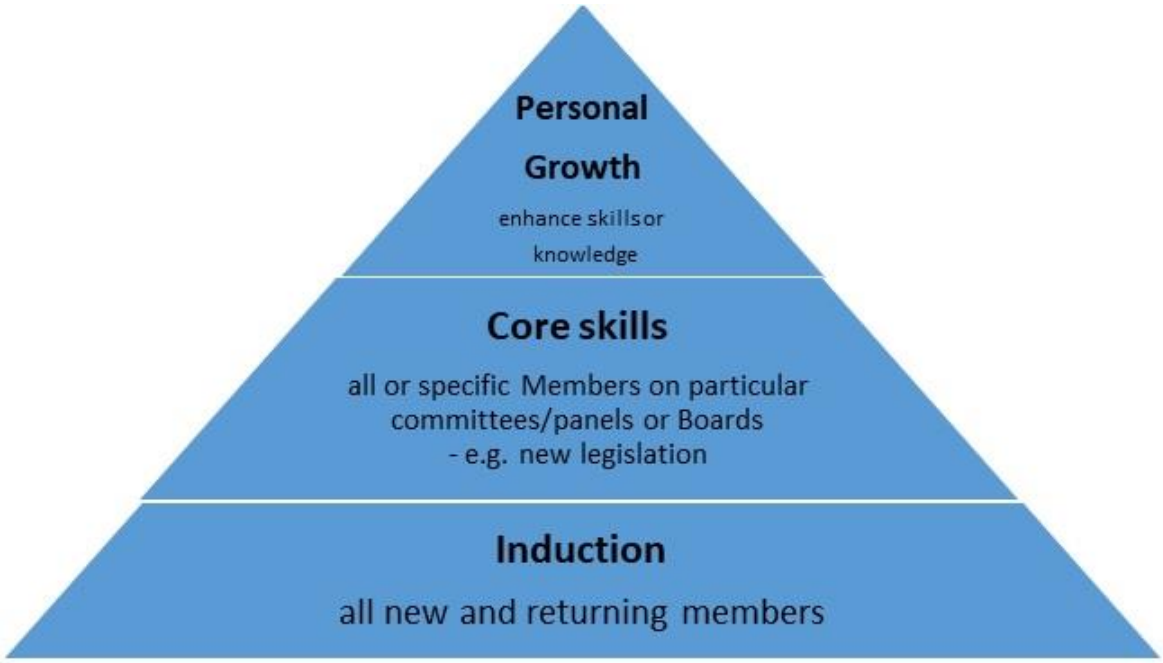
Each year a core learning programme will be developed, in consultation with Elected Members themselves. It will include the requirements of any new legislation and emerging corporate themes, ethical and governance requirements and changing standards, and the impact of any Scrutiny recommendations in terms of changing corporate practices.

The programme also includes learning in response to emerging themes and developments from partner agencies, including such things as your role as a corporate parent, disclosable pecuniary interests, chairing meetings, data protection training, Prevent training, safeguarding children and adults awareness, and training related to specific roles with regards to servicing planning, licensing or employment appeals/interview panels. Some topics have been designated as mandatory learning and members will be required to provide evidence of completion of these.

Learning for Personal Growth and Development

Members have access to a vast amount of learning modules aimed at enhancing knowledge providing useful information to help them learn more about their role, Council directorates, the borough of Walsall and to help develop their core skills.

In light of the tragic events which saw the murders of MPs Jo Cox and David Amess, learning about 'Personal Safety and Lone Working' is highly recommended, together with other health and safety related topics.



External Opportunities

Democratic Services often receive information on regional events or those offered by other local authorities that may be of interest to Walsall Council. When appropriate, these will be circulated to:

- All Members
- Members who have identified the topic as an area for development
- Members who would directly benefit from attending due to their specific role

Those wishing to take advantage of these events should notify Democratic Services who will in turn evaluate the request in line with business need and available budget. Decisions will be shared in an open and transparent way.

Promoting the sharing of learning

Members are strongly encouraged to share any learning from attendance at both internal and external events as this is a valuable way of acquiring information about a wide range of issues, including new and innovative practice, new legislation and other regional and national developments.

Members attending external events should make any relevant course material available to others by placing a copy in the Members/Group Rooms or sharing material electronically. Members may also be asked to produce short written report or briefing to share with their peers.

How to book onto a face to face course

Democratic Services Officers will advise Members of dates of any face to face learning opportunities which will be scheduled at key points during the Municipal Year and not less than quarterly.

Any communication will advise as to the exact booking process. However, Members should contact Democratic Services to indicate their interest in attending a specific event. Once successfully booked, Democratic Services will provide the necessary joining instructions including date, venue, timings, and any pre-course requirements.

Prior to booking onto any training, Members should consider:

- What they want to be able to do or do better
- How success will be recognised
- How personal improvement will be reviewed and measured
- What methods will be used to achieve learning objectives
- How such learning will be put into practice

Learning and Development for all

Democratic services, together with the learning and development team are committed to the active promotion and support of equality of opportunity in the way their respective services are managed and delivered, ensuring that:

- Marketing and booking processes are such that they give all learners equal access to development activities
- Any identified reasonable adjustments are provided to support members' attendance at a learning event, such as large print handouts or interpreters
- Individuals wishing to undertake any accredited programmes are selected on the basis of business need, merit and ability

Cancellation policy

In order to run a cost effective service and to maximise the opportunities for all to attend training they have identified, we ask that Members provide Democratic Services with as much notice as possible of any cancellations.

On the rare occasion that a course has to be cancelled, delegates will be notified at the earliest opportunity. Wherever possible delegates will be offered a replacement date.

Evaluation

To be effective, learning and development should match the needs of Members, as well as meeting the objectives of the Council and its partners, in achieving a shared vision for Walsall.

It is essential that all learning and development provision is reviewed for relevance and effectiveness, and Members are therefore requested to complete an Evaluation of the event post attendance.

Monitoring and evaluation should be:

- Open and constructive, enabling any necessary enhancements to be made to future delivery
- Regularly monitored by Democratic Services, the Learning and Development Team and the Standards Board to ensure delivery of objectives and continuous improvement
- Clearly communicated to Members through the various group Leaders

Processes include:

- Regular recognition and acknowledgement of Member achievements both individually and within political groups
- Encouragement for Members to be self-aware in recognising their own strengths and weaknesses

Recording completed learning

As per the constitution, Members are required to undertake at least 12 hours training per annum.

Whether face to face or via e-learning, completion of any learning needs to be captured on the council's HR platform, One Source.

The system will automatically capture completion of any elearning undertaken on the platform, whilst Democratic Services will inform the Learning and Development Team of any attendance at face to face training organised by the council.

Members are responsible for providing Democratic Services with full details of any training attended outside of these formal arrangements so that their learning transcript can be kept up to date.

Feedback and Complaints

Both Democratic Services and the Learning and Development Team aim to provide Members with an excellent service that is responsive to the needs of the organisation and individual learners. All learning programmes are demand-led and continually monitored for quality, suitability and value for money.

In order to continue to deliver an effective service, Members are requested to provide any feedback (good or bad) as often as possible. All course evaluations are reviewed and any issues raised will be followed up.

If Members are dissatisfied in any way please contact any member of the Democratic Services or Learning and Development Team directly.

All concerns are treated seriously and dealt with promptly with feedback used to inform and improve our services.

Equally if Members feel that they have received an excellent service or support, or have benefitted greatly from one of our learning opportunities please let us know.

Democratic Services will notify Members as and when specific learning opportunities become available or are required to be undertaken. However Members are advised to check out additional opportunities available through the Learning and Development Team and Walsall Safeguarding Partnership.

These are available at

Learning and development opportunities (walsall.gov.uk) – Inside Walsall

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership eLearning & Virtual Training (walsall.gov.uk) – public accessible site

Alternatively Members can access their One Source account and search for a keyword to see what is available.

Click on the image to access the One Source portal or contact Democratic Services for support or take a look at our training and support documentation that is available here.

Below is a list of currently relevant courses for Members.

Induction

Course Title/ subject area	Method of delivery		Status
	Face to face/ virtual	Elearning – self paced	
New Councillor Training including rules for debate			**Mandatory**
Your role as a Councillor			**Mandatory**
Introduction to Local Government			**Mandatory**
Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interest for New Councillors			**Mandatory**

Core Skills

Course Title/ subject area	Method of delivery		Status
	Face to face/ virtual	Elearning – self paced	
Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interest			**Mandatory**
GDPR (Data Protection)		**Annual requirement**	**Mandatory**
Planning Committee			**Mandatory for Committee Members**
Licensing and Safety Committee			**Mandatory for Committee members/substitutes**
Personnel Committee/Appointments and Dismissals			**Mandatory for Committee members/substitutes**
Employment and Appeals Committee (A&B)			**Mandatory for Committee members/substitutes**
LGA Scrutiny Skills A) Question setting	6 October		**Highly recommended**
Member Officer Protocol	TBC		**Highly recommended**
LGA Chairing Skills	13 Nov		**Highly recommended**
WSP Training - Level 1 - Basic Neglect Awareness for Children			**Mandatory** for those who have contact with children whether this be direct or indirect contact
Introduction to Equality and Diversity	Additional face to face		**Mandatory**

	courses may also be available		
WSP Training - Level 1 - Safeguarding Adults Introduction			**Mandatory** for those who have contact with vulnerable adults, this could be direct or in-direct.
Prevent	Periodically also available as Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP)		**Highly recommended**
The Council's finances/budget setting/medium term financial planning			**Highly recommended**
Social Media – do's and don'ts			**Highly recommended**
Unconscious Bias			**Highly recommended**
Public Speaking/ getting the best from the Media			**Highly recommended**
The role of the corporate parent			**Highly recommended**
Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery			**Highly recommended**
Total Respect Training	7 Oct		**Highly recommended**
Child Sexual Exploitation			**Highly recommended**
Management of change – tools/techniques and impact			**Optional**

Personal Growth and Development

Course Title/ subject area	Method of delivery		Status
	Face to face/ virtual	Elearning – self paced	
Meeting Skills			**Optional**
Presentation Skills			**Optional**
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation			**Optional**
Optimising Team Performance – Introduction to Coaching			**Optional**
Leadership Skills – finance for none-financial managers			**Optional**
Mental Health First Aid	Courses are available as an awareness or qualification		**Optional**
Display Screen Equipment (DSE)			**Optional**
Fire Safety awareness		General awareness – building specific guidance should be observed	**Highly recommended**
Personal Safety and lone working – street safe			**Highly recommended**
Assertive communication			**Optional**
Confidence and Assertiveness			**Optional**
Effective Time Management			**Optional**

Facilitation Skills			**Optional**
Managing your priorities			**Optional**
Stress awareness			**Optional**
Email Stress – how to use emails effectively			**Optional**
Microsoft Office365	Microsoft Office tutorials available on line at Microsoft 365 Training		**Optional**
Change and Transition			**Optional**
Learning to Learn			**Optional**
Self-Development			**Optional**
Personal Resilience	Resilience and Me also available		**Optional**
Debt Management and Collection			**Optional**
Agile working – generic			**Optional**
Introduction to sustainability and carbon management			**Optional**
Introduction to Dementia			**Optional**