

To: Standards Committee

Date: 24 February 2025

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Title of Report: Seeking Standards Committee’s views on Government Consultation in relation to changes to the Standards regime

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To seek the comments in relation to the Government’s consultation on changes to the Standards regime
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	N/A
Corporate Priority:	none
Policy Framework:	none

Recommendation(s): That Standards Committee:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the Governments consultation “Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England” on proposed changes to the standards regime including the proposals of creating more significant sanctions for members found in breach and the possibility of an established independent body to deal with standards issues. 2. Note that this has been shared with group leaders and the Independent Person for them to also respond 3. Confirm whether the Committee would like to submit any responses and, if so, confirm what those responses should be

Information Exempt From Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Consultation Document - Strengthening the standards and	No

	conduct framework for local authorities in England	
Appendix 2	Commentary of the Monitoring Officer	No

Introduction and background

1. The consultation “Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England” is an open consultation by the government. The deadline for response is 11:59pm on the 26 February.
2. Copies have been sent to the Independent Persons for the Council, the Group Leaders and Committee are asked if it would like to submit a response.
3. This consultation seeks views on introducing measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England and ensure consistency of approach amongst councils investigating serious breaches of their member codes of conduct, including the introduction of the power of suspension.
4. Specific proposals being consulted upon for legislative change include:
 - a. the introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England
 - b. a requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards committees to make decisions on code of conduct breaches and publish the outcomes of all formal investigations.
 - c. the introduction of the power for all local authorities (including combined authorities) to suspend councillors or mayors found in serious breach of their code of conduct and, as appropriate, interim suspension for the most serious and complex cases that may involve police investigations.
 - d. a new category of disqualification for gross misconduct and those subject to a sanction of suspension more than once in a 5-year period
 - e. a role for a national body to deal with appeals.
5. In addition, the consultation seeks views on how to empower victims affected by councillor misconduct to come forward and what additional support would be appropriate to consider.
6. A copy of the consultation is at appendix 1, however it can also be accessed on line [here](#).
7. Committee would be responding on behalf of the Council, though members can also comment in their own right by using the link and submitting comments online.
8. The Monitoring Officer has prepared her comments for Committee in Appendix to, as a guide, though it is open to the Committee to respond as it feels appropriate.

Alternative Options Considered

9. Members could respond in their own right, and no response could be submitted by Standards Committee on behalf of the Council.

Other implications

10. There are no implications arising from this report. The consultation will be followed by a response and proposed way forward from the government which, if enacted in law, will be reflected in the Council's Constitution and processes as required.

Financial implications

11. None.

Legal issues

12. None

Level of risk

13. Not relevant.

Equalities impact

14. Not relevant though Committee is asked to note that the consultation demonstrates the governments consideration of this issue within the document.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

15. None.

Report author	Emma Jackman
Job title	Director of Law, Governance & Strategy (Monitoring Officer)
Service area or department	Law, Governance and Strategy
e-mail	ejackman@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers:	
1	None

This page is intentionally left blank