

Appendix 2

List of Best Practice Recommendations

Best practice 1: Local authorities should include prohibitions on bullying and harassment in codes of conduct. These should include a definition of bullying and harassment, supplemented with a list of examples of the sort of behaviour covered by such a definition.

Oxford City Council position: this is now included within the code of conduct, where a Councillor should not bully or harass any person or not discriminate against any person.

Best practice 2: Councils should include provisions in their code of conduct requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation, and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors.

Oxford City Council position: This included in the revised [Code of Conduct complaints handling documentation](#), introduced in March 2019.

Best practice 3: Principal authorities should review their code of conduct each year and regularly seek, where possible, the views of the public, community organisations and neighbouring authorities.

Oxford City Council position: Although there is no formal annual review of the current Code of Conduct, it is subject to periodic review at meetings of the Oxfordshire Monitoring Officers' Group as it is a common document adopted by all the Oxfordshire local authorities. At Oxford City Council, the Code of Conduct is kept under regular review by the Monitoring Officer and the Council's Independent Persons as part of the process of investigating complaints about Councillors' behavior and when the Constitution is reviewed annually. Any identified shortfall in the current Code of Conduct would be referred to the Council's Standards Committee and to the Oxfordshire Monitoring Officers' Group.

Best practice 4: An authority's code should be readily accessible to both councillors and the public, in a prominent position on a council's website and available in council premises.

Oxford City Council position: The [Members' Code of Conduct](#) is published on the website and is available on request from the Monitoring Officer.

Best practice 5: Local authorities should update their gifts and hospitality register at least once per quarter, and publish it in an accessible format, such as CSV.

Oxford City Council position: Details of the "gifts and hospitality" received are available online by searching for the profile of an individual councillor. These are updated once the Councillor has notified the Monitoring Officer.

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Best practice 6: Councils should publish a clear and straightforward public interest test against which allegations are filtered.

Oxford City Council position: It is included in the revised [Code of Conduct complaints handling documentation](#), introduced in March 2019.

Best practice 7: Local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons.

Oxford City Council position: The Council currently has six Independent Persons following a successful recruitment campaign in 2025. Their terms of office last for five years until 31 July 2030.

Best practice 8: An Independent Person should be consulted as to whether to undertake a formal investigation on an allegation and should be given the option to review and comment on allegations which the responsible officer is minded to dismiss as being without merit, vexatious, or trivial.

Oxford City Council position: This is covered by the revised [Code of Conduct complaints handling documentation](#), introduced in March 2019.

Best practice 9: Where a local authority makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following a formal investigation, a decision notice should be published as soon as possible on its website, including a brief statement of facts, the provisions of the code engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the reasoning of the decision-maker, and any sanction applied.

Oxford City Council position: It is included in the revised [Code of Conduct complaints handling documentation](#). Following a formal investigation the Monitoring Officer's Decision Notice is published on the website under the Standards Committee webpage.

Best practice 10: A local authority should have straightforward and accessible guidance on its website on how to make a complaint under the code of conduct, the process for handling complaints, and estimated timescales for investigations and outcomes.

Oxford City Council position: It is covered by the revised [Code of Conduct complaints handling documentation](#), introduced in March 2019.

Best practice 11: Formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk should be made by the chair or by the parish council as a whole, rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances.

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Oxford City Council position: This is a matter for the Parish Councils, and the Monitoring Officer will remind all Parish Councils of this best practice proposal.

Best practice 12: Monitoring Officers' roles should include providing advice, support and management of investigations and adjudications on alleged breaches to parish councils within the remit of the principal authority. They should be provided with adequate training, corporate support and resources to undertake this work.

Oxford City Council position: These arrangements are in place.

Best practice 13: A local authority should have procedures in place to address any conflicts of interest when undertaking a standards investigation. Possible steps should include asking the Monitoring Officer from a different authority to undertake the investigation.

Oxford City Council position: These arrangements are in place and available when required. Officers with the Law, Governance and Strategy team have been commissioned to undertake investigations for other local authorities.

Best practice 14: Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.

Oxford City Council position: These arrangements are in place. The Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) explains, each year, how it manages its corporate governance arrangements, makes decisions, manages its resources, and promotes values and high standards of conduct and behaviour. The AGS sets out the annual spend, activity, and governance arrangements for each of the Council's companies.

The AGS includes details for the Council's wholly owned direct services companies Oxford Direct Services Ltd (ODSL) and Oxford Direct Services Trading Limited (ODSTL) as well as its three housing companies (Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL), Oxford City Housing (Investment) Limited (OCH(I)L) and Oxford City Housing (Development) Limited (OCH(D)L)). OCHL is wholly-owned by the Council, and OCH(I)L and OCH(D)L are both wholly-owned subsidiaries of OCHL. The Council also holds a 50% share in Oxford West End Development Limited ("OxWED"), a company jointly owned with Nuffield College and in 2011 entered into a Joint Venture ("JV") with Grosvenor Developments Ltd, known as Barton Oxford LLP (BOLLP) to enable the delivery of a new housing development at Barton Park.

Each of the Council's companies hold regular Board meetings throughout the year. In addition, representatives of the housing companies and the direct service companies attended periodic reporting meetings with their shareholders. These shareholder meetings have been regularised into quarterly reporting meetings.

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The activities of the Council's Shareholder group have been and will continue to be scrutinised throughout the year by the Finance and Performance Working Group (of the Scrutiny Committee).

Best practice 15: Senior officers should meet regularly with political group leaders or group whips to discuss standards issues.

Oxford City Council position: These arrangements are in place; a monthly meeting between the statutory officers and all political group leaders are scheduled.