

| Standards Committee | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Meeting Date | 23 September 2025 |
| Report Title | Code of Conduct Arrangements |
| EMT Lead | Robin Harris - Monitoring Officer |
| Head of Service | |
| Lead Officer | |
| Classification | Open |
| Recommendations | <p>The standards committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the draft code of conduct arrangements and make any necessary amendments. 2. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to consult with all members as to the content of the arrangements. 3. Delegate the Monitoring Officer to make any further amendments, in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee. 4. Recommend the arrangements to Full Council, following the outcome of the consultation with all members. |

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report asks the committee to consider the draft code of conduct complaints arrangements at appendix I ("arrangements") in their current form and make any necessary amendments to them. To agree to consult with all members in respect of the content and form of the arrangements and to recommend the arrangements to Full Council for adoption.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council adopted a new code of conduct in February 2023, based largely on the LGA Model Code of Conduct. However, the arrangements for handling complaints, that sit behind the code of conduct were unchanged at that time.
- 2.2 The LGA does not produce model arrangements but does provide guidance on the handling of code of conduct complaints, from which consistent arrangements can be deduced.
- 2.3 The Standards Committee in April 2024 determined to pursue new arrangements for Swale Borough Council. In July 2024 the Standards Committee considered a draft set of arrangements that had been made available for members to provide comments on and further refined this

document. The draft arrangements were based on the Kent Secretaries agreed arrangements, that are used widely across Kent.

- 2.4 Following the July meeting, the government made announcements suggesting that there might be national changes to the code of conduct regime. As such, the Committee paused work on new Swale arrangements and subsequently provided comments on the government's consultation on strengthening the local code of conduct regime, which ran from December 2024 to February 2025.
- 2.5 At the Standards Committee meeting in July 2025, the Committee noted that there had been an absence of any progress from the government following this consultation and directed the Monitoring Officer to circulate the most up to date version of the draft Swale arrangements and bring a further report to the September 2025 Committee.
- 2.6 The previous report and most up to date version of the draft arrangements was shared with Committee Members on 4th August. At the date of writing, there remains no further update from Central Government as to any national changes.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Between April and July 2024, the Committee made substantial progress with new draft arrangements. As such the Standards Committee is asked to: **Consider** the draft code of conduct arrangements and make any necessary amendments to the text, form and content.
- 3.2 **Authorise** the Monitoring Officer to consult with all members as to the content of the arrangements.
- 3.3 **Delegate** the Monitoring Officer to make any further amendments to the text, following the consultation, with reference to the Chairman of the Standards Committee.
- 3.4 **Recommend** the arrangements to Full Council, following the outcome of the consultation with all members.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The Council is required to have arrangements for dealing with code of conduct complaints. The form of the arrangements is a matter for the Council. The Council could therefore retain its existing amendments.
- 4.2 In the alternative, the Council could consider wholly different arrangements. This is not recommended, as in following the arrangements agreed by the Kent Secretaries group, Swale will be aligned with other districts and the county council.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to consult with all members, as all members can be affected by the operation of the amendments.

6 Implications

| Issue | Implications |
|--|---|
| Corporate Plan | The idea of a member/officer protocol supports the council's fourth priority of 'Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future'. |
| Financial, Resource and Property | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Legal, Statutory and Procurement | The Council is required to have arrangements in place for dealing with code of conduct complaints. |
| Crime and Disorder | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Health and Wellbeing | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Equality and Diversity | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Privacy and Data Protection | No implications identified at this stage. |

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Draft arrangements with member comments

8 Background Papers

8.1 Report to Standards Committee on [11th July 2024](#)