

Title of Report	ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS ARRANGEMENTS	
Presented by	<p>Kate Hiller Head of Legal and Support Services and Monitoring Officer</p>	
Background Papers	<p>Current Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints About Councillors Current Flowchart of Complaints Process</p>	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	<p>There are no direct financial implications arising.</p>	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: yes	
Legal Implications	<p>The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to adopt Arrangements for dealing with complaints about Members' conduct. The Council already has these Arrangements in place, based on LGA Guidance, however, it is prudent to keep these Arrangements under review to ensure they still reflect best practice since their adoption in 2022.</p>	
	Signed off by the Deputy Monitoring Officer: yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	<p>There are no direct staffing or corporate implications arising.</p>	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: yes	
Purpose of Report	<p>To ask the Committee to consider the work of the Governance Working Group on the review of the Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints About Councillors, and to recommend their adoption to Council</p>	
Recommendations	<p>THAT AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NOTES THE WORK OF THE CROSS-PARTY WORKING GROUP IN CONDUCTING THE REVIEW OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS ABOUT COUNCILLORS; CONSIDERS THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ARRANGEMENTS, SUMMARISED IN THE REPORT AND AT APPENDIX A AND ILLUSTRATED AT APPENDIX B; 	

	3. RECOMMENDS THE AMENDMENTS TO THE ARRANGEMENTS TO COUNCIL AT ITS MEETING ON 19 FEBRUARY 2026 FOR ADOPTION WITH EFFECT FROM 20 FEBRUARY 2026
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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 s27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 requires each local authority to adopt a councillor code of conduct and s28(6) also requires there to be arrangements under which allegations against councillors can be investigated, and decisions can be made. The Council adopted its Councillor Code of Conduct and Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints about Councillors (the “Arrangements”) on 24 February 2022. The Arrangements were reviewed in 2024 and it is intended that they continue to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- 1.2 Subject to the recommendations in this report being agreed, Full Council will consider the report on the review of the Arrangements at their meeting on 19 February 2026.

2.0 METHOD OF REVIEW

- 2.1 The review of the Arrangements was carried out by the Governance Working Group. The Governance Working Group is a cross-party working group comprised of Councillors Cooper, Johnson, Moulton, Simmons and Smith.
- 2.2 The Working Group met on 23 July 2025 and agreed its terms of reference, along with the timetable for the review of the Arrangements. In addition, the Working Group considered and agreed a number of proposed changes.
- 2.3 Members have provided invaluable insight and constructive challenge to the review process and are thanked for their time and work on this review.

3.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN CHANGES PROPOSED

- 3.1 Appendix A shows the proposed changes summarised in a schedule of changes. Appendix B contains a copy of the Arrangements with the revisions having been made, and shows the proposed changes as tracked changes. This enables Members to see the proposed changes in one place and in the context of the Arrangements as a whole. There are no consequential amendments to the Council’s Constitution arising from the review of the Arrangements.
- 3.2 The proposed changes cover the following:
 1. An additional stage being added to allow the Monitoring Officer to filter out complaints made a long time ago.
 2. Making it clear in the Arrangements that complainants should fill in the requisite form and providing a link to the form (but also making it clear what to do if a complainant does not wish to use the form).
 3. Acknowledgement that reasonable adjustments can be sought, but ensuring these are requested in advance.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the changes are adopted from 20 February 2026.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	A Well-Run Council
Policy Considerations:	It is a legal requirement to have a Members' Code of Conduct and Arrangements for dealing with complaints.
Safeguarding:	N/A
Equalities/Diversity:	N/A
Customer Impact:	A clear yet comprehensive set of Arrangements will enable customers to understand the process if they wish to complain about the conduct of a Councillor, to provide assurance that all legitimate complaints will be investigated thoroughly and fairly. The revised Arrangements (and existing Flowchart) will be available for members of the public to access online, or at the Council offices as per the address within the Arrangements.
Economic and Social Impact:	N/A
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon	N/A
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	N/A
Risks:	The Arrangements are a legal requirement. Having compliant Arrangements which set out the process for dealing with complaints may reduce the risk of any challenge to NWL processes.
Officer Contact	Zoheb Fazil Legal Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer ZOHEB.FAZIL@nwleicestershire.gov.uk