

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Update on Standards Matters – June 2026	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Borough Solicitor	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Standards Committee	<b>DATE</b> 11 June 2026
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report brings to Members’ attention recent matters concerning standards for information.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Cheryl Hardman Principal Democratic Services Officer Camden Town Hall Judd Street London WC1H 9JE 020 7974 1619 <a href="mailto:cheryl.hardman@camden.gov.uk">cheryl.hardman@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>That Standards Committee notes and comment on the contents of the report.</p>	

Signed: 

Borough Solicitor

Date: 1 June 2026

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report highlights recent matters concerning standards, which will be of interest to the Committee.

## 2. Publication of home addresses in Registers of Interests

- 2.1. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012<sup>1</sup> required that any beneficial interest in land that is within the area of the relevant local authority be included in a councillor's Register of Interests. The Monitoring Officer has agreed to withhold home addresses as a sensitive interest while including the electoral ward, this being in line with Section 32(2) of the Localism Act 2011. A 'sensitive interest' is one which could lead to the councillor, or person associated with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation. Other interests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.2. Following wider concerns about councillor safety, the Government has legislated to amend the Localism Act 2011 to require that a councillor's residential address not be published in the public register unless they explicitly request it be included. Section 65 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026<sup>2</sup> is due to come into effect from 29 June 2026, at which time registers will be amended to say, 'The home address has been withheld under Section 32A of the Localism Act 2011'. It should be noted that for the purposes of this requirement, a councillor is considered to have no more than one usual residential address. Home addresses should still be disclosed, and these will be held in a separate internal register.

## 3. Ethics and Integrity Commission updates

- 3.1. The Ethics and Integrity Commission (EIC) was launched on 31 October 2025, replacing the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL). It aims to promote high standards in public life, report to the Prime Minister on ethical standards issues, and advise public authorities on the development of clear codes of conduct and oversight arrangements<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.2. In April 2026, the EIC published an updated report mapping the standards landscape in the UK entitled *Ethics and Integrity Institutions: Mapping UK Standards in Public Life*<sup>4</sup>. Chapter 6 focuses on local government, providing a useful summary of the current standards framework and highlighting Government proposals to strengthen this.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1464/made> [accessed: 18 May 2026]

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2026/23/section/65/enacted> [accessed: 18 May 2026]

<sup>3</sup> Main website: <https://eic.independent-commission.uk/>

Terms of reference: <https://eic.independent-commission.uk/what-we-do/terms-of-reference/> [accessed: 8 May 2026]

<sup>4</sup> <https://eic.independent-commission.uk/publication-of-report-on-the-standards-landscape/> [accessed: 8 May 2026]

## 4. Audit Findings

### Teignbridge District Council

- 4.1. Following an earlier report, external auditors (Grant Thornton) have for a second time made a statutory recommendation that Teignbridge District Council addresses abusive behaviour towards officers and councillors during meetings<sup>5</sup>. It had previously recommended using procedural rules set out in the Constitution and commissioning an expert to investigate underlying causes of poor behaviour. While progress had been made, further work was required. The auditors also repeated a recommendation on access to information, addressing a finding that Members did not always understand what information they had a legal right to and that, in a specific instance, some Members had breached confidentiality.

### Borough Solicitor's Comment

- 4.2. Abusive behaviour towards officers and councillors during meetings would be a breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct. This is specifically addressed by the obligation to treat other councillors, members of the public and employees with respect. The Code also identifies an obligation to behave appropriately in committee and Council meetings, under direction of the Chair/Mayor. This includes the use of appropriate language. The Member/Officer Protocol also addresses the need for mutual respect and notes that officers cannot respond to public comment from Members. Councillors must therefore take care not to undermine officers publicly through personal criticism or abuse. This does not prevent Members from criticising reports or the work of a department or service where they consider this merited. It can be noted that Camden does not traditionally have a culture of poor conduct from councillors during meetings.
- 4.3. Councillors have certain rights and responsibilities regarding information that enables them to fulfil their duties. This is outlined in Part 4 of the Constitution under Access to Information Rules. The Code of Conduct obliges councillors not to disclose confidential information except for in certain circumstances.

## 5. Standards Cases

### Wokingham Borough Council

- 5.1. Wokingham Borough Council's Standards Panel has found that Councillor Stuart Munro breached the Code of Conduct by taking part in determining a planning application after strongly objecting to it in a consultation response<sup>6</sup>. It found that Councillor Munro should have declared an interest and not participated further, in accordance with legal advice provided. The Panel

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<sup>5</sup> <https://localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/99283-auditors-tell-council-to-address-abusive-behaviour-in-meetings-for-second-year-in-row> [accessed: 8 May 2026]

<sup>6</sup> <https://localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/99544-councillor-who-made-up-his-mind-ahead-of-planning-vote-breached-code-of-conduct> [accessed: 11 May 2026]

instructed the Monitoring Officer to provide training to the councillor. Councillor Munro stated that the application had been amended in the year since he had submitted his comments and noted that he had not participated in the discussion.

*Borough Solicitor's Comment*

- 5.2. Objectivity is one of the Seven Principles of Public Life that underpins the Councillor Code of Conduct. Bias and predetermination are particularly relevant concerns for regulatory functions, such as planning and licensing. The case above is indicative of predetermination, whereby a councillor has suggested that they have made up their mind before an application has come before the committee. Members of Planning Committee and Licensing Panel must act and be seen to act impartially and honestly, approaching a decision with an open mind. The Planning and Licensing Protocols provide further guidance. Members are also encouraged to seek advice from the Borough Solicitor, legal advisers to Planning Committee and Licensing Panels, or Democratic Services Officers prior to a meeting where necessary.

Tameside Council

- 5.3. Five councillors and one former councillor have been found to have breached the Code of Conduct for their involvement in a WhatsApp group called 'Trigger Me Timbers'<sup>7</sup> that included offensive content<sup>8</sup>. The independent investigator had concluded the councillors were acting in their official capacity as some of the messages concerned council business and took place during formal meetings<sup>9</sup>.
- 5.4. The Hearing Panel determined their findings against each Subject Member consecutively. It was recommended that four of the Subject Members - Councillors Brenda Warrington, Allison Gwynne, George Newton and Jack Naylor – be censured, be removed from committees and outside bodies, and be required to undertake training. Claire Reid was no longer a councillor but the Panel agreed that she would have received the same sanctions. It was accepted that Councillor George Jones was genuinely sorry and that his age and lack of experience played a significant role. It was recommended that he be censured.

*Borough Solicitor's Comment*

- 5.5. The Code of Conduct applies when a councillor acts in that capacity. This includes when a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of the facts would have the impression that a person is acting as a councillor. The Code

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<sup>7</sup> <https://tameside.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s201393/Standards%20Sub%20Committee%20Mins.pdf> [accessed: 11 May 2026]

<sup>8</sup> [https://tameside.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s200513/Appendix%205%20-%20FINAL%20Report%20Tameside%20Council%20pn2%20Version%2021-1-2026\\_Redacted%20Page%2051.pdf](https://tameside.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s200513/Appendix%205%20-%20FINAL%20Report%20Tameside%20Council%20pn2%20Version%2021-1-2026_Redacted%20Page%2051.pdf) [accessed: 11 May 2026]

<sup>9</sup> <https://localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/99588-standards-investigation-finds-six-councillors-breached-code-over-trigger-me-timbers-whatsapp-group> [accessed: 11 May 2026]

explicitly applies to all forms of interaction, including written and electronic communication, and therefore would apply to WhatsApp.

#### Leicestershire County Council

- 5.6. On 5 May 2026, the Member Conduct Panel at Leicestershire County Council found that Councillor Charles Whitford had breached the Code of Conduct by sending “bullying” and “intimidating” emails to residents<sup>10</sup>. Members of the public had contacted Councillor Whitford to complain about the unauthorised hanging of St George’s flags on lampposts<sup>11</sup>. Complainants alleged that the responses were “dismissive, personalised and/or confrontational”. The Panel determined that Councillor Whitford had breached the Code with regard to treating members of the public with respect, not bullying and harassing anyone, promotion of equalities and not discriminating unlawfully, and not bring the role of councillor or Council into disrepute. The agreed sanctions included being formally censured and being required to issue a public apology<sup>12</sup>.

#### Borough Solicitor’s Comment

- 5.7. Councillors engage in extensive interactions with residents with regard to council business and matters of local concern. All communications should be respectful and align with the Councillor Code of Conduct. Where councillors feel that they lack experience with regard to case work they are invited to discuss opportunities for training with Member Support.

#### Leicester City Council

- 5.8. Councillor Patrick Kitterick was found to have breached Leicester City Council’s Code of Conduct by failing to treat others with respect at a Full Council meeting<sup>13</sup>. This related to comments about another councillor’s taking of Members’ allowances that were deemed irrelevant and designed to humiliate<sup>14</sup>. A further comment that was considered offensive to another councillor was not found to have breached the Code as it was relevant to the debate and was protected speech under Article 10(2) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Agreed sanctions included Councillor Kitterick being required to provide a written apology and attend training.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8r85y4jd21o> [accessed: 11 May 2026]

<sup>11</sup> <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s195913/Monitoring%20Officer%20Cover%20Report.pdf> [accessed: 11 May 2026]

<sup>12</sup> <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=1017&Mid=8571&Ver=4> [accessed: 11 May 2026]

<sup>13</sup> <https://news.leicester.gov.uk/news-articles/2026/may/councillor-found-in-breach-of-code-of-conduct-by-standards-panel/> [accessed: 12 May 2026]

<sup>14</sup>

<https://cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/documents/b42171/Standards%20Hearing%20Decision%20Notice%20and%20Report%20Wednesday%2006-May-2026%2017.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=9> [accessed: 12 May 2026]

### Borough Solicitor's Comment

- 5.9. This case highlights the obligation that Members must behave respectfully at committee and Council meetings. In an investigation into a potential breach, the requirement for politeness and courtesy in behaviour and speech would need to be balanced with the right of councillors to express and challenge views, ideas, opinions and policies in line with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

### North Yorkshire Council

- 5.10. A Standards and Governance Committee Hearing Panel at North Yorkshire Council has found that Councillor Andrew Lee breached the Code of Conduct with regard to use of council resources<sup>15</sup>. This related to the use of a Council pool car for personal business and failure to follow guidance on making claims for mileage. However, high usage of a Council-issued mobile phone was found to have been a genuine mistake and the result of incorrect phone settings. Councillor Lee was ordered to reimburse the Council for personal use of pool cars and mileage claims and to return his mobile phone to the Council. The Panel also made a series of recommendations to the Council, including that all Members with a Council-issued mobile phone return these as phone expenses were included in Members' Allowances and that Members should not have access to council pool cars without Monitoring Officer authorisation.

### Borough Solicitor's Comment

- 5.11. Camden's Councillor Code of Conduct obliges Members not to misuse council resources. This includes acting in accordance with local authority requirements and ensuring that they are not used for political purposes. Further guidance on this is found within the Guidance on Use of Information Technology which is published within the Constitution.

## **6. Comments of the Director of Finance**

- 6.1. The Director of Finance has been consulted and has no comments to add.

## **7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

- 7.1. This is a report of the Borough Solicitor and there are no other legal comments.

## **8. Environmental Implications**

- 8.1. There are no environmental implications.

**REPORT ENDS**

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<https://edemocracy.northyorks.gov.uk/documents/s59777/SGC2025039%20Decision%20Notice%20by%20Hearings%20Panel.pdf> [accessed: 12 May 2026]