

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Agenda

Date Wednesday 9 September 2026

Time 6.00 pm

Venue J R Clynes Second Floor Room 1 - The JR Clynes Building

- Notes 1. Declarations of Interest- If a Member requires advice on any item involving a possible declaration of interest which could affect his/her ability to speak and/or vote he/she is advised to contact Alex Bougatef or Constitutional Services at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
2. Contact officer for this agenda is Constitutional Services email constitutional.services@oldham.gov.uk
3. Public Questions - Any Member of the public wishing to ask a question at the above meeting can do so only if a written copy of the question is submitted to the contact officer by 12 noon on Friday, 4 September 2026.
4. Filming - The Council, members of the public and the press may record / film / photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Constitutional Services Officer who will instruct that they are not included in the filming.

Please note that anyone using recording equipment both audio and visual will not be permitted to leave the equipment in the room where a private meeting is held.

Membership of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Councillors Barnes, Ghafoor, Shah, Tarbuck, Taylor and Williamson

Town and Parish Councillors: Councillor Roger Blackmore (Saddleworth Parish Council) and Councillor Lee Navesey (Shaw and Crompton Town Council)

Item No

- 1 Election of Chair

 To elect a Chair for the duration of the meeting.
- 2 Apologies for Absence
- 3 Urgent Business

 Urgent business, if any, introduced by the Chair
- 4 Declarations of Interest

 To Receive Declarations of Interest in any Contract or matter to be discussed at the meeting.
- 5 Public Question Time

 To receive Questions from the Public, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- 6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 6)

 The Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5th March 2026 are attached for approval.
- 7 Composition of Standard Sub-Committee (Pages 7 - 8)

 To confirm the composition of the Standards sub-committee
- 8 Review of Member Code of Conduct Matters (Pages 9 - 26)

 For members of the Standards Committee to note the current Members Code of Conduct and related matters.
- 9 Member-Officer Protocol (Pages 27 - 34)

 To receive and note the member-officer protocol.
- 10 Elected Member Survey (Pages 35 - 42)

 To note the Elected Member Survey.

Present: Councillor Harrison (Chair)
Councillors Byrne, Marland, Nasheen and Shuttleworth
Parish Councillor Roger Blackmore (Saddleworth Parish
Council), Town Councillor Lee Navesey (Shaw and Crompton
Town Council), Mark Reynolds (Independent Member), Karen
Williams (Independent Member)

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Marc Hince	Elected Member
Alex Bougatef	Group Solicitor
Jack Grennan	Constitutional Services
Councillor Lisa Navesey	Elected Member

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies received.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES**

A discussion was held on the minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee meeting held on 11th November. Councillors Marc Hince and Lisa Navesey was invited to address the committee. It was noted that the recommendation for Councillor Kenyon to send a personal apology to Councillors Shah, Hince and Navesey had not yet been fulfilled, and it was raised that this would be chased up with the Director of Legal with the committee being informed either way.

Members noted that this was not the first time that a Standards Sub-Committee recommendations had not been met and noted that councillor standards across the UK needed improving.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 24th June 2025 and the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee held on 11th November 2025 be approved as a correct record.

6 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they contain exempt information under paragraph(s) 1 and 2

of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and it would not, on balance, be in the public interest to disclose the reports.

7

MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Director of Legal introduced the item, noting that there had been a national deterioration of member and officer relationships. The thinking behind the reworking of the protocol was that there was both a lack of powers and a need for a more robust member/officer protocol. Some parties feel that certain parties and members are treated differently and there needed to be an understanding that this shouldn't be the case. Specific scenarios were outlined. It was highlighted that the previous version of the protocol was brief.

The Chair noted that feedback on the protocol should be received by Wednesday 11th March 2026 at the latest.

Members suggested that some member/member scenarios would be helpful alongside the member/officer ones. Members also queried the timescales for resolving each scenario, noting an urgency timeframe and it was highlighted that the plan was to deal with issues quickly.

Members noted that training around this protocol would hopefully eliminate most cases as members would know how to behave in those scenarios. Members also queried how this protocol would work and whether it would be compulsory. It was noted that whilst it wouldn't be compulsory, it would be a public document that would go to full council and standards complaints could refer to it.

Members queried whether officers would make complaints against members and whether officers would be protected. It was noted that this depended on staff members but the importance of staff raising complaints was highlighted, and reassurance was given that officers would be protected.

RESOLVED that the protocol be agreed in principle.

8

MEMBER/OFFICER SURVEY

The Director of Legal presented the survey, noting that this was part of the Member/Officer process, with the survey going to all members to complete. It was noted that members could request anonymity for their answers.

Members noted the positive approach, querying where the information would go. It was explained that the hope was that there would be no issues, but that if there were, they would need to be investigated.

Members queried how often the survey would be undertaken, as it could be useful for this to be repeated. It was noted that the Director of Legal was happy to take comment from the Committee as to when they felt it would be useful. The Chair noted that, as with the previous item, feedback should be sent in by Wednesday 11th March 2026.

Members suggested that mandatory training for officers and members on how to request things would be helpful, and that the scenarios would be helpful as part of the training.

Members queried how many responses to the survey would be needed to make it meaningful. The Director of Legal noted that uptake was being looked at.

RESOLVED that the survey be agreed in principle.

9

STANDARDS COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Director of Legal presented an update into standards complaints. Members queried the costs of independent investigators, time frames and the standards process.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and ended at 7.15 pm

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Report to Standards Committee

Composition of Standards sub-committee

Report of The Borough Solicitor

Reason for Decision

To confirm the composition of the Standards sub-committee

1 Background

- 1.1 The Standards sub-committee deals with the determination of referred complaints from the Monitoring Officer and any hearings required.
- 1.2 The Standards sub-committee will have five Oldham Council members on the sub-committee. An Independent Person will also attend a sub-committee meeting. If the matter relates to a Parish/Town Council member, the sub-committee will include at least one Parish /Town Council member.
- 1.3 The sub-committee will be politically balanced and comprise of 2 Labour Group members, 1 from Reform one from the Oldham Group and one from the Liberal Democrats.

2 Recommendation

The Committee confirms the composition of the sub-committee as outlined above.

3 Financial Implications

None

4 Legal Implications

None

5 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

N/a

6 Key Decision

Not applicable

7 Background Papers

None

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Report to Standards Committee

9th September 2026

Member Code of Conduct matters

Report of the Borough Solicitor

Reason for Decision

For members of the Standards Committee to note the current Members Code of Conduct and related matters.

1 Background

1.1 The report asks the Committee to note the current Member Code of Conduct and Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code that was last reviewed in June 2025.

1.2 To note the updated Member / Officer protocol and questionnaire.

1.3 Member Code of Conduct

The Council adopted in September 2021 a model Code of Conduct which had been developed by the LGA. The Code was last reviewed in June 2025 with a previous update in September 2024. The Code is detailed below.

"Councillor Code of Conduct

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a "Councillor" means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A "co-opted member" is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as "a person who is not a member of the authority but who:

- a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
- b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority and;

who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee".

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, "local authority" includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

General principles of Councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, Councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles. Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of Councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of Councillor.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of Councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a Councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a Councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a Councillor
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a Councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a Councillor.

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and parish Councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.

1.5 Standards of Councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a Councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken. Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

The general conduct guidance follows below:

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor - officer protocol.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose

unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the council

As a Councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a Councillor:

4.1 I do not disclose information:

- a. given to me in confidence by anyone**
- b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless**
 - i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;**
 - ii. I am required by law to do so;**
 - iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or**
 - iv. the disclosure is:**
 - 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and**
 - 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and**
 - 3. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.**

4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is

required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a Councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other Councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in you or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow Councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As a Councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a Councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse council resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:

- a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and**
- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.**

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a Councillor.

Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers

-
- transport
 - access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a Councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

8.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.

8.2 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

8.3 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.

8.4 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is extremely important for you as a Councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a Councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority. You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow Councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other Councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in Table 1, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a Councillor:

10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.

10.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.

10.3 I register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a Councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a Councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a Councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

11. If any member has any safeguarding concerns, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, in connection with any person, it is the duty of the member to report these concerns to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit,

using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B - Registering Interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the Councillor, or a person connected with the Councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non-participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest.

Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects –
- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registerable Interests as set out in **Table 2** you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied
9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well-being:
- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

11. Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable

Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the **Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.**"

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interest

You must register as an Other Registerable Interest :

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

1.4 The Standards Code refers to dispensations. A dispensation may be granted if the authority:

- a) considers that without dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in any particular business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business
- b) considers that without the dispensation the representation of different political groups on the body transacting any particular business would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of the vote
- c) considers that granting the dispensation is in the interests of the persons living in the authority.
- d) considers that without the dispensation each member of the authority's executive would be prohibited from participating in any particular business to be transacted by the executive or
- e) considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

The Standards Committee is asked to note that the general dispensations have been provided to members under delegations to participate and vote on setting the council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation) and matters directly related to such decisions such as budget calculations and council tax reduction and discount schemes (where the interest may arise from being a property owner or responsibility to pay the council tax) and allowances and indemnities given to members (where the interest may arise as recipient of the allowance and indemnity) and continue and readopt the dispensations as appropriate to do so under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011. Dispensations were granted for a period of 3 years in June 2025. The Standards Committee are also asked to note the dispensations to members to participate and vote on setting the council tax or precept or matters relating to such decisions such as budget calculations and council tax reduction and discount schemes where members have an other registrable interest arising from appointment by the Council to a body.

1.5 Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code

The current arrangements are detailed below.

“Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure applies when a complaint is received that a Member, Co-opted Member or Parish Council Member has or may have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members.
- 1.2 The person making the complaint will be referred to as “the complainant” and the person against whom the complaint is made will be referred to as the “Subject Member”.
- 1.3 No member of officer will participate in any stage of the arrangements if he or she has, or may have, any personal conflict of interest in the matter.

2. Making a complaint

- 2.1 A complaint must be made in writing by using the link [Councillor complaints form](#) or e-mail to; The Monitoring Officer, constitutional.services@oldham.gov.uk
- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days of receiving it and, at the same time, write to the subject Member (and in the case of a complaint about a Parish Councillor to the Clerk of the Parish Council also) with details of the allegations (subject to any representations from the complainant on confidentiality, which are accepted as valid by the Monitoring Officer). The subject member may, within 10 working days of receipt, make written representations to the Monitoring Officer which must be taken into account when deciding how the complaint should be dealt with. Representations received after this time may be taken into account, at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, but will in any event not be considered after the Monitoring Officer has issued the initial assessment of the complaint.

3. Initial Assessment of Complaint

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer will reject a complaint if it is not a complaint against a Councillor of Oldham MBC or a Parish Councillor within the area or the Councillor was not in office at the time of the alleged conduct. The Monitoring Officer will review the complaint and following consultation with the Independent Person, take a decision (Initial Assessment) as to whether it merits investigation, or another course of action. This decision will normally be taken within 20 working days of receipt of a complaint.
- 3.2 If appropriate, the Monitoring Officer will consider the following criteria where relevant in deciding whether a complaint should be accepted for investigation, dealt with informally, or rejected;
 - Whether a substantially similar allegation has previously been made by the complainant to The Council, or the complaint has been the subject of an investigation by another regulatory authority
 - whether the complaint appears to be malicious, vexatious, politically motivated or tit for tat.
 - Whether the complaint is about something that happened so long ago that those involved are unlikely to remember it clearly enough to provide credible evidence, or

where the lapse of time means there would be little benefit or point in taking action now;

- Whether the allegation is anonymous
 - Whether the allegation discloses a potential breach of the Code of Conduct, but the complaint is not serious enough to merit any action and the resources needed to investigate and determine the complaint are wholly disproportionate to the allegations and whether in all the circumstances there is no overriding public benefit in carrying out an investigation.
 - Whether the complaint suggests that there is a wider problem throughout the Authority;
 - Whether it is apparent that the subject of the allegation is relatively inexperienced as a Member or has admitted making an error and the matter would not warrant a more serious sanction;
 - Whether training or conciliation would be the appropriate response.
- The Monitoring Officer will consult with the Independent Person and then give a decision on how the complaint will be dealt with. The Monitoring Officer may in exceptional circumstances refer the question of how to proceed to a sub-committee of the Standards Committee.

4. Additional Information

4.1 The Monitoring Officer may require additional information to come to a decision and may request information from the Subject Member. Where the complaint relates to a Parish Councillor, the Monitoring Officer may also inform the Clerk of the Parish Council of the complaint and seek the views of the Clerk of the Parish Council before deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation or other action. In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally, without the need for an investigation. Such informal resolution may involve the subject member accepting that his/her conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology, or taking other steps. Where the subject Member or the Council (in appropriate cases) makes a reasonable offer of local resolution, but it is rejected by the complainant, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

4.2 If the complaint identifies criminal conduct or breach of other regulations by any person, the Monitoring Officer is authorised to report this to the Police or other prosecuting or regulatory authority in addition, to any action taken pursuant to the Code of Conduct.

5. Confidentiality

5.1 If a complaint has asked for their identity to be withheld, this request will be considered by the Monitoring Officer at the initial assessment stage.

5.2 As a matter of fairness and natural justice the subject Member should usually be told who has complained about them and receive details of the complaint. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Monitoring Office may withhold the complainant's identity if on request from the complainant, or otherwise, they are satisfied that the complainant has reasonable grounds for believing that they or any witness relevant to the complaint may be at risk of physical harm, or his or her employment may be jeopardised if their identity is disclosed, or where there are medical risks (supported by medical evidence) associated with the complainant's identity being disclosed.

5.3 If the Monitoring Officer decides to refuse a request by a complainant for

confidentiality, they will offer the complainant the option to withdraw the complaint, rather than proceed with his or her identity being disclosed. The Monitoring Officer will balance whether the public interest in taking action on a complaint will outweigh the complainant's wish to have his or her identity withheld from the subject Member.

6. Investigation

- 6.1 The Monitoring Officer will appoint an investigating officer where a complaint merits formal investigation. The investigating officer may be a Council officer, an officer from another Council, or an external investigator.
- 6.2 The investigating officer will follow guidance if issued by the Monitoring Officer on the investigation of complaints. The guidance will follow the principles of proportionality and the cost effective use of Council resources and shall be interpreted in line with these principles.
- 6.3 At the end of their investigation, the investigating officer will produce a draft report and will send copies of that draft report to the complainant and to the Subject Member, for comments. The investigating officer will take such comments into account before issuing their final report to the Monitoring Officer.

7. Investigating Officer finding of no failure to comply with the Code of Conduct

- 7.1 Where the Investigating Officer's report finds that the Subject Member has not failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person, will review the Investigating Officer's report and if satisfied, will confirm the finding of no failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.
- 7.2 The Monitoring Officer will write to the Complainant and the Subject Member (and to the Clerk of the Parish Council, where the complaint relates to a Parish Member), with a copy of the decision and the Investigating Officer's report.
- 7.3 If the Monitoring Officer is not satisfied that the investigation has been conducted thoroughly, the Investigating Officer may be asked to reconsider the report and the conclusions.

8. Investigating Officer finding of sufficient evidence of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct

Where the Investigating Officer's report finds that the Subject Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and will then having consulted the Independent Person either send the matter for local hearing before the hearing panel or seek local resolution.

8.1 Local Resolution

If the Monitoring Officer considers that the matter can reasonably be resolved without the need for a hearing, they will consult with the Independent Person and the Complainant and seek to agree a fair resolution. Such resolution may include the Subject Member accepting their conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology, and/or other remedial action including mediation or training. If the Subject Member accepts the suggested resolution, the Monitoring Officer will report the outcome to the Standards Committee and the Clerk to the Parish Council (if appropriate) for information but will take no further action. If the Complainant or the Subject Member refuses local resolution in principle or to engage with the agreed

outcome, the Monitoring Officer will refer the matter for a local hearing without further reference to the Complainant or the Subject Member.

8.2 Local Hearing

Where, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, local resolution is not appropriate or the Complainant and/or Subject Member refuses to accept local resolution, then the Monitoring Officer will report the Investigating Officer's findings to the Hearing Panel which will conduct a local hearing before deciding whether the Member has failed to comply with a Code of Conduct and, if so, what action (if any) to take in respect of the Member.

9. Constitution of the Hearing's Panel

The Hearing's Panel is a sub-committee of the Council's Standards Committee. It will comprise of one of the independent persons and five members of the Council drawn from the Standards Committee. Where the complaint is about a Parish Council Member, the hearing panel will include at least one of the Parish Council Members co-opted to the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee comprises such elected members as determined by the Council, four Independent persons and a Parish Councillor representative from each Parish Council. Oldham Council members have voting rights only.

Procedure at the hearing

1. The sub-committee comprises currently five members of the Standards Committee. An independent person will also attend the sub-committee and a Parish Councillor if the matter relates to a Parish Council Councillor.
2. The Chair shall explain the procedure and ask all present to introduce themselves. The member against whom the complaint has been made shall be known as the Subject Member for the purpose of this procedure.
3. The Investigating Officer outlines his/her report and presents the report, including any documentary evidence and calls such individuals as he/she considers appropriate to give evidence.
4. The Subject Member or their representative may question the Investigating Officer upon the content of their report and may question any witnesses called by the Investigating Officer.
5. Members of the sub-committee may ask questions of the Investigating Officer and any witnesses called.
6. The Subject Member or their representative may present his/her case and call witnesses as required.
7. The Investigating Officer may question the Subject Member and/or any witnesses.
8. Members of the sub-committee may also question the Subject Member and/or any witnesses.
9. The Investigating Officer may sum up the complaint.
10. The Subject Member or representative may sum up their case.
11. Members of the sub-committee consider in private the complaint and consider whether there has been a breach of the code.
12. In the presence of all the parties, the Chair of the sub-committee will announce the decision that either the Subject Member the opportunity to make representations on whether action or sanctions should be taken.
13. If the sub-committee decides that the Subject Member has failed to follow the code, the sub-committee will give the Subject Member the opportunity to make representations on whether action or sanctions should be taken,
14. The sub-committee will consider in private what action should be taken and then in the presence of all the parties, the chair shall announce the decision.

-
15. The Chair will confirm that the decision will be provided in writing to the Subject Member within 7 days following the meeting.

10. The Independent Person

The independent person must be a person who has applied for the post following advertisements of a vacancy for the post and appointed by a positive vote from a majority of all the Members of the Council at a meeting of the full Council. A person is not eligible for appointment if they:

- are, or have been within the past five years a Member, co-opted Member or officer of the Council
- are, or have been within the past five years a Member, co-opted Member or officer of a Parish Council within the Borough; or
- are a relative or close friend of a person within the 2 above bullet points. For this purpose, “relative” means that:
 - Spouse or civil partner
 - Living with the other person as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners
 - Grandparents of the other person
 - A lineal descendant of a Grandparent of the other person
 - A parent, sibling or child of the person within the above bullet points
 - A spouse or civil partner of a person within the above bullet points; or
 - Living with a person within the above bullet points as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners.

11. Action

Where a hearings panel find that a Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, the hearing panel may;

- Publish its findings in respect of the Member’s conduct
- Report its finding to Council (or to the Parish Council) for information
- Recommend to Council (or to the Parish Council) that the member be censured
- Recommend to the Members Group Leader (or in case of ungrouped members recommend to Council) that he/she be removed from any or all committees or subcommittees of the Council.
- Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the Member be removed from the Executive, or removed from their portfolio responsibilities
- Instruct the Monitoring Officer to (or recommend that the Parish Council) arrange training for the Member
- Recommend to Council (or recommend to the Parish Council) that the Member be removed from all outside bodies, appointments to which they have been appointed or nominated by the Council (or by the Parish Council).
- Withdraw (or recommend to the Parish Council that it withdraws) facilities provided to the Member by the Council such as a computer, website and/or email and internet access.
- Exclude (or recommend that Parish Council exclude) the Member from the Council’s offices or other premises, with the exception of meeting rooms as necessary for attending Council, Committee and sub-Committee meetings or place such restrictions on access to staff as may be reasonable in the circumstances.

12. Revision of these Arrangements

The Council may by resolution or the Monitoring Officer may, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee amend these arrangements where they consider that it is expedient to do so in order to secure the effective and fair consideration of any matters.

13. Appeals

Subject to judicial review or a decision of a local ombudsman, there is no right of appeal against the decision of a Monitoring Officer or of the Hearing Panel.”

14.Current Position

The Standards sub-committee comprises of 5 members drawn from the Standards Committee to deal with any complaints referred by the Monitoring Officer for assessment and any hearings required. There are currently 3 appointed Independent Persons. One Independent Person is asked by the Monitoring Officer to be consulted on an assessment of a complaint, one Independent Person will be available if the subject member requests views and one Independent Person will be available for any hearing.

The Standards Committee are requested to note the current Arrangements.

The Council currently have three Independent Persons under the Localism Act 2011 to assist in standards matters.

15. Recommendations

- The Committee are requested to note the current Member Code and Arrangements and the current general dispensations already approved.
- The Committee are requested to note the updated Member / Officer Protocol.

16 Financial Implications

None

17 Legal Implications

None

18 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

N/a

19 Key Decision

Not applicable

20 Background Papers

Updated Member / Officer Protocol and Questionnaire

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OLDHAM COUNCIL MEMBER–OFFICER PROTOCOL

Owner: Monitoring Officer (Director of Legal Services)

Approval Route: Standards Committee → Council

Review Cycle: Annual

Effective Date:

Supersedes: Previous Member/Officer Protocol

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This Protocol forms part of Part 5 (Codes and Protocols) of Oldham Council's Constitution and sets the standards, principles and working practices that govern relationships between elected Members and Officers. It complements the Members' Code of Conduct and the Officers' Code of Conduct and should be read alongside relevant rules of procedure and guidance.

Its purpose is to:

- promote effective, respectful and professional working relationships;
- clarify respective roles and responsibilities;
- protect impartiality and integrity in decision- making; and
- provide proportionate routes to resolve concerns swiftly and fairly.

2. STATUS, OWNERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

2.1 This Protocol has constitutional status. All Members and Officers are required to comply with it alongside the Codes of Conduct and the law.

2.2 Ownership: The Monitoring Officer is the lead custodian of this Protocol. The Standards Committee oversees its application and effectiveness and may recommend updates to Council. The Chief Executive and Directors ensure officer- side compliance and learning.

2.3 Induction, Training and Development: The Protocol forms part of Member and Officer induction. Targeted refresher sessions will be provided at least annually and when there are material changes to law, guidance or local arrangements.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Members – core duties (illustrative, not exhaustive)

- Set policy and budget within the framework agreed by Full Council.
- Provide community leadership; represent constituents and the wider borough.
- Hold the Executive and Officers to account through scrutiny, audit and regulatory functions.
- Participate in committees, panels and outside bodies in accordance with appointments made by the Council.
- Uphold high standards of conduct and comply with the Members' Code of Conduct, including declarations of interest.
- Use Council resources properly and lawfully and respect information governance requirements.

3.2 Officers – core duties (illustrative, not exhaustive)

- Provide impartial, professional advice to Members of all political groups as appropriate.
- Implement lawful decisions of the Council, the Executive and delegated decision- makers.
- Manage and deliver services efficiently, effectively and within budget.
- Ensure compliance with law, policy, financial regulations and procurement rules.
- Support democratic processes, including timely preparation of reports, briefings and responses to Member enquiries.
- Safeguard the impartiality of officers and avoid any actions that could reasonably be perceived as biased.

3.3 Statutory Officers

The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer (s151) have specific statutory responsibilities. Members and Officers must respect and facilitate the discharge of those duties.

4. WORKING TOGETHER IN PRACTICE

4.1 Policy development and decision- making

Members articulate policy objectives and desired outcomes; Officers develop evidence- based options, risk assessments and implementation plans. Records of advice, options and decisions should be clear, timely and proportionate.

4.2 Oversight, performance and risk

Members rely on Officers for accurate and candid information to discharge scrutiny, audit and regulatory roles. Officers must be open and constructive when challenged, recognising Members' democratic accountability.

4.3 Operational liaison

Operational decisions are for Officers within their delegated authority. Where significant operational actions impact a ward or portfolio, relevant Members should be informed appropriately and in good time.

4.4 Briefings and information requests

Officers will provide briefings suited to the topic and audience. Requests for information should be reasonable and proportionate. Officers will provide information to all parties as appropriate, ensuring fairness while recognising the Executive's need for timely support to deliver its priorities.

5. BEHAVIOURS AND CULTURE

5.1 Nolan Principles: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership underpin all conduct.

5.2 Expected behaviours include:

- Frankness and candour – be clear about needs, constraints and risks.
- Respect for roles – understand respective responsibilities and pressures.
- Constructive challenge – raise concerns fairly and focus on solutions.
- Recognition – acknowledge good performance and positive behaviours.
- Outcome focus – follow process proportionately to secure agreed outcomes.

- Communication – be timely, clear and courteous; avoid discourtesy and bullying.
- Dignity and courtesy – maintain professionalism in all communications, including digital and social media.

6. RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS AND THIRD PARTIES

Members and Officers must maintain the same standards of integrity and impartiality when engaging with businesses, developers, public agencies (e.g. GMCA, NHS, GMP), trade unions, voluntary and community organisations, and lobby groups. Members must register and declare interests in line with the Members' Code of Conduct.

7. INFORMATION, ACCESS AND PUBLICITY

Access to information is governed by law and Council procedure rules. Confidential and exempt information must be protected. Public communications should be accurate, balanced and politically neutral on the officer side, and respectful of officer impartiality on the member side.

8. LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICE

The Council will identify and share examples where positive Member–Officer collaboration delivers improved outcomes. Good practice will inform training, guidance and induction materials.

9. RESOLVING CONCERNS AND DISPUTES

Where issues arise, the presumption is for early and informal resolution between the parties involved. Where this is not possible, escalation should be proportionate and follow agreed lines of accountability.

1. Attempt informal resolution between the individuals concerned, referencing this Protocol.
2. Seek advice from relevant managers, Group Whips/Leaders (for Member issues) or HR (for Officer issues).
3. Refer matters to the Monitoring Officer where conduct or governance is in question.
4. Use formal procedures under the Members' Code of Conduct or HR/disciplinary policies where warranted.

10. BREACHES AND SANCTIONS

Failures to meet expected standards may result in informal action (advice, guidance, training). Serious or persistent breaches may trigger formal processes.

10.1 If the issue relates to a Member

- Advice, guidance or training delivered by the Monitoring Officer or Standards framework.
- Recommendations from the Standards Committee under the Localism Act arrangements.
- Group disciplinary measures (e.g. removal from committee or position) in accordance with group rules.
- Restrictions on contact with specific officers or requirements to channel contact through named officers, where appropriate.

10.2 If the issue relates to an Officer

- Management action and support, including advice and training.
- Formal HR processes in line with Council policies (including disciplinary action where appropriate).
- Safeguarding or referral to external agencies where necessary (e.g. police).

11. MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS

The Monitoring Officer will put in place proportionate arrangements to assess effectiveness, which may include surveys, focus groups, learning reviews, observation of meetings and analysis of incident reports. The Standards Committee may seek assurance on these mechanisms and findings, informing the Annual Governance Statement as appropriate.

12. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Oldham Council Constitution (especially Part 5 – Codes and Protocols).
- Members' Code of Conduct and guidance.
- Officers' Code of Conduct.
- Access to Information Procedure Rules and Data Protection policies.
- Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules.

- Arrangements for dealing with standards complaints under the Localism Act 2011.

13. DEFINITIONS (ABBREVIATED)

"Member": An elected councillor or co-opted member as defined in the Constitution.

"Officer": An employee or contractor of the Council acting in an official capacity.

"Executive": The Leader and Cabinet or any arrangements defined in the Constitution.

"Standards Committee": The committee responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct and overseeing the standards framework.

14. REVIEW AND REVISION

This Protocol will be reviewed annually by the Monitoring Officer, with recommendations to the Standards Committee. Substantive changes require Council approval.

ANNEX A – PRACTICAL SCENARIOS

Scenario 1: Member seeks operational action

A ward Member contacts a service manager requesting that a specific officer “immediately attend” to an operational issue (e.g., refuse collection delay).

Correct approach: The Member should report the issue and request information, not direct staff. The officer should acknowledge the concern, update the Member appropriately, and escalate internally via line management.

Scenario 2: Officer briefing a Cabinet Member

An officer receives a request from a Cabinet Member for a briefing on a cross-portfolio matter.

Correct approach: The officer should provide the briefing and notify relevant Directors, ensuring transparency and alignment with internal governance.

Scenario 3: Disagreement in scrutiny

A scrutiny Member challenges an officer’s report publicly.

Correct approach: Officers should respond openly and professionally, and Members should frame challenge respectfully. Any post-meeting concerns should be raised with the Monitoring Officer or relevant Director.

Scenario 4: Perceived officer bias

A Member believes an officer has acted in a way that appears partisan.

Correct approach: Raise the issue privately with the Monitoring Officer. Officers must avoid actions that could reasonably be perceived as favouring any political group.

Scenario 5: Social media criticism

A Member posts criticism of officers on social media.

Correct approach: The Protocol requires concerns about officers to be raised privately. The Monitoring Officer may intervene, and training or standards action may follow.

ANNEX B – ESCALATION FLOWCHART

- Step 1: Identify issue → Attempt informal resolution between Member and Officer
- Step 2: If unresolved → Seek advice from Manager / Group Leader / HR as appropriate
- Step 3: If still unresolved → Refer to Monitoring Officer
- Step 4: Monitoring Officer assesses → May refer to Standards Committee or HR formal process
- Step 5: Formal route → Standards investigation (Members) / HR procedure (Officers)
- Step 6: Outcome → Recommendations, training, sanctions as applicable

Oldham Council – Elected Member Survey

Welcome to this survey for Oldham Council elected members. Thank you for taking the time to complete it. The reason we are asking you to contribute is because the Council needs to better understand elected members and their needs. Strengthening member–officer relationships has been identified as a priority.

The survey will provide:

- An understanding, for members and officers, of your current experiences and expectations, which we can compare with future results to show where Oldham Council is improving support for councillors.
- Evidence to inform the Council's Improvement Programme and support for members, including how the Council understands and supports councillors' roles in leadership, decision-making and robust oversight.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as candid as possible so improvement activity can be reflective of your needs, concerns and expectations—as well as those of officers and partners. Only on the basis of full, candid sharing will change be possible.

This survey supports ongoing cultural change work with officers and forms part of the Council's actions to stabilise and strengthen governance and member officer working relationships. The work is overseen by statutory officers, including the Monitoring Officer and involves the standards committee.

How will this information be used, and can I be identified?

Even if you do not provide your name and contact details, you may be concerned that you could be identifiable through your responses. If you wish to be wholly anonymous Individual responses can be returned in hard copy For the attention of Alex Bougatef, delivered to the JR Clynes building and you will not be identifiable.

In analysing the data, we will seek to identify themes and trends across the cohort, focusing on points of divergence and commonality rather than attributing views to groups. A short report summarising findings will be produced and made public. Initial insights may be shared with the relevant member body. At the end of the process, personal information will be removed, and an anonymised dataset provided to Oldham Council to support future comparative analysis.

About you

The first part of this survey gathers information about you and your time on the Council to help design support that best meets members' needs.

1. Your name and contact details (optional) – if you would like to discuss your answers, please provide details here.
2. What political group do you represent? (Labour / Oldham Group / Conservative / Liberal Democrat / Reform / Failsworth Independent Party / Independent / Other – please specify)
3. How old are you? (18–25 / 25–34 / 35–49 / 50–64 / 65–75 / 75+)
4. Do you consider that you have one or more of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010? (If so please detail- Optional)
5. Are you a care leaver? (i.e., were you at any point a child “looked after” by a local authority?)
6. What is your gender? (Male / female)
7. What is your ethnicity? (standard options)
8. For how long have you been an Oldham councillor? (If first elected in a by-election and/or you have had a break in service, please note below)

Under 2 years / Under 6 years / Under 10 years / Between 10 and 15 years / Between 15 and 20 years / Over 20 years

Further comments:

9. In your time as a councillor, please tick the formal roles you have held and those you hold now.

Leader / Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member / Cabinet Support Member / Scrutiny Chair / Planning or Licensing Chair / Standards Chair / Audit Chair / District/Area Committee Chair / Member of a scrutiny committee / Nominee or appointee to an outside body / Member Champion / Other (specify)

10. In respect of these roles, do you consider that you get the support you need to carry them out?

11. To what extent are you confident that you understand what is required of you in your current role(s)?

Very confident / Somewhat confident / Not very confident / Not at all confident

Your activities and time commitment

What kind of activities do you carry out as a councillor, and roughly how long each week do you spend on them? (Please estimate hours for each)

- Talking to senior officers about decision-making, service performance, etc.
- Group business (meetings/discussion within your political group)
- Party business (campaigning, doorknocking, leafletting, party meetings)
- Ward business (resident casework; community issues; local planning/licensing engagement)
- Executive/Cabinet business (including meetings and preparation)
- Scrutiny business (committee attendance, evidence giving, preparation)
- Regulatory meetings (planning and licensing; including preparation time)
- Quasi-judicial meetings (exclusion appeals and other panels)
- Other formal meetings (e.g., Full Council)
- Outside bodies (e.g., council-nominated roles; GMCA/Police & Crime Panel)
- Civic/ceremonial business
- Other activities (please specify)

12. Do you think that the amount of time you devote to council business has increased, decreased or stayed about the same in the past five years (or since you were first elected)?

Increased / Decreased / Stayed about the same

Further information:

Non-council commitments

13. How much time a week do you spend on the following (to understand non-council pressures)?

Caring responsibilities; Paid work responsibilities; Unpaid work/volunteering (please estimate hours)

Wellbeing and safety

14. To what extent does your work on the council impact your overall sense of wellbeing?

Very positively / Positively / Neither positively nor negatively / Negatively / Very negatively

15. Have you experienced harassment or victimisation connected to your role as a councillor? (personal experience)

Provide responses across sources: From other members / From officers / From the public / From someone else; and for each indicate: Experiencing now / Experienced in the past / Both past and present / Never

16. To what extent are you concerned that your role as an elected member puts you at greater risk of harassment and/or victimisation than you otherwise would be?

Very concerned / Quite concerned / Not especially concerned / Not concerned at all

Member–officer relations

17. How would you describe your overall working relationship with officers?

Very positive / Mostly positive / Mixed / Mostly difficult / Very difficult

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree):

- ☐ I can easily access the officer support I need.
- ☐ Officers communicate with me promptly and professionally.
- ☐ Officers understand the role of elected members.
- ☐ Members understand officers' roles, responsibilities and limits.
- ☐ There is mutual trust between members and officers.
- ☐ Escalation routes are clear when something goes wrong.
- ☐ Officers are impartial, consistent and politically neutral.
- ☐ Member behaviour towards officers is generally respectful.
- ☐ Officer behaviour towards members is generally respectful.
- ☐ Briefings and reports are clear, timely and useful.
- ☐ Training and guidance on member–officer working is effective.

About the Council and your work on it

Please consider the following statements, and the extent to which you agree with them (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree):

- ☐ Governance is about having clear rules and sticking to them.
- ☐ I understand the Council's key rules for its formal business, including decision-making (as set out in the Constitution).
- ☐ It's important for councillors to have a direct line to officers on the front line.
- ☐ Councillors face almost impossible decisions about what to cut to set a balanced budget.
- ☐ When I have a concern about how something is being done (member or officer), I have a safe way to voice/escalate my concerns.
- ☐ The allowances I receive are sufficient to support me to be an effective councillor.
- ☐ When allocating resources, the Council needs to be better at deciding what is and isn't a priority.
- ☐ The Council understands the needs of local people.
- ☐ The Council is good at working with local people.
- ☐ I work well with members of my own party.
- ☐ I work well with members of other parties.
- ☐ I work well with officers.
- ☐ I worry that the work I do on the Council doesn't make a positive difference to local people.
- ☐ I feel able to scrutinise and oversee the work of Cabinet, Commissioners/assurance partners and senior officers.
- ☐ I feel overwhelmed with the responsibility and volume of work expected of me.
- ☐ The Council communicates with me, on matters relevant to my role, in a way I can understand.
- ☐ I feel informed about the steps the Council is taking to improve.
- ☐ I understand the role I can personally play in helping the Council to improve.
- ☐ Having the right structures, systems and processes in place leads to better attitudes, relationships and behaviours.

- ☐ I have the personal support I need to carry out my Council roles properly.
- ☐ I have the skills I need to carry out my Council roles properly.

Understanding and support needs

How well do you think you understand the following issues? (1 = do not understand at all; 5 = understand extremely well)

- ☐ How the Council makes decisions.
- ☐ How the Council enters into partnership with other bodies (including GMCA).
- ☐ How the Council enters into major contracts.
- ☐ How the Council monitors major contracts.
- ☐ How the Council understands, reviews and mitigates risk.
- ☐ How the Council plans and manages its finances.
- ☐ How the Council partners with other organisations.
- ☐ How the Council gathers and uses the views of local people.
- ☐ The role that external assurance/Improvement and Assurance Board activity plays in Oldham's improvement.
- ☐ The steps being taken to bring about that improvement.

Where could your skills benefit from improvement and development?

Tick all that apply.

Knowledge-based skills:

- ☐ Council knowledge – meetings, Councillor Code of Conduct, Constitution and committee roles, performance data, scrutiny reviews, etc.
- ☐ Understanding the role of officers – including key statutory roles (Monitoring Officer, s151 Officer, DCS, DASS).
- ☐ Subject knowledge – e.g., housing, education, planning system.
- ☐ System knowledge – “how things work here” and how to get things done.
- ☐ Understanding council finances – commercial context, budget mechanics, external funding.

- Knowing the local area you represent – ward data, surgeries, forums, engagement with community groups.
- Keeping up to date – horizon-scanning and awareness of future events.

Personal / practical skills:

- Personal resilience (e.g., stress management).
- Dealing with bullying and harassment.
- Personal safety (including de-escalation).
- Active listening.
- Communication skills (public speaking, media, digital).
- Leading/supporting diverse communities; awareness of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Working with officers.
- Making use of information, data and analysis.
- Meeting skills (including digital meeting skills and chairing).
- Being organised and tracking open issues.
- Time management and casework management.
- Prioritisation – focusing on activities with greatest impact.
- Taking advantage of learning and development opportunities, mentoring and peer support.

Final comments

18. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as an Oldham councillor, or how the Council can better support you?

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