

- A mandatory code of conduct – to establish a higher minimum standard of expected behaviours and ensure consistency, reflecting the government’s commitment to public service and to updating the 30-year code to cover discrimination, bullying, use of social media, and other issues not featuring in the current minimum requirements.
- A requirement for principal Local Authorities to convene formal Standards Committees – to ensure all Local Authorities have formal, transparent processes to uphold and promote standards.
- A role for a national body to deal with the most serious cases and appeals, as was the case under the former system with the Standards Board for England, subject to discussions with the sector.
- Powers to suspend, including imposing premises and facilities bans – to allow Local Authorities to enforce their own standards. The government believes that councils need the ability to address serious misconduct with powers to suspend councillors for a maximum of six months, with the option to withhold allowances where deemed appropriate.
- Disqualification if subject to suspension more than once – to curb the risk of “repeat offending” and empower councils to signal that poor behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Subject to discussions with the sector we will explore immediate disqualification in certain instances of serious misconduct.
- Interim suspension whilst under investigation – to reassure the public that action is being taken. This could be used in serious cases that may involve protracted investigations or the police, for example alleged fraud or assault.
- Publication of all code breach investigation outcomes – to enhance transparency, giving the public the opportunity to check their council’s record on maintaining good conduct.

4.2.5 Local Authority members and workforce

Voters elect their councillors to improve their area and solve the problems facing it. But previous Whitehall rules and years of underfunding have harmed councils’ capacity to do their job and deliver for their residents, by diminishing the appeal of the sector as a workplace.

It is vitally important that the system works to recruit and retain high performing members and officers. We will continue to work with the sector on support and development for elected members, including addressing barriers to attracting and retaining them. To support this work, the government proposes the following improvements:

- **Workforce development:** The local government workforce is facing widespread capacity challenges, caused by ongoing problems with recruitment and retention. To help start to tackle them, we will establish a local government workforce development group – this will

be run in partnership with the sector and will identify practical solutions to help resolve and improve workforce issues and promote the sector as a great place to work, while ensuring the workforce is set-up for the future.

- **Remote attendance:** To encourage a greater diversity of people to stand as councillors and ensure better scrutiny of council decisions, this government is formally seeking views on proposals to enable elected members to remotely attend formal council meetings, the intent being that an elected member who needs to attend a meeting virtually will have the option and flexibility to do so. This reform will also enable sitting councillors who are not able to physically attend meetings on an on-going or temporary basis to represent the communities they serve.
- **Proxy voting:** We are seeking views on enabling elected members to use proxy voting – so that a member of a decision-making body may delegate their voting power to another representative to enable a vote in their absence, such as in cases when they are temporarily unable to participate in meetings due to personal circumstances for a limited period.
- **Address publication requirements:** Attracting high-quality elected officials also depends on making public office safe for prospective candidates. We propose to remove the requirements for a local government member's home address to be published. Currently, councils may consider requests to remove home addresses from published lists but there is inconsistency in how councils choose to apply this provision. Publication of this personal information can risk members or their families being subject to violence and intimidation. We believe it should be put beyond doubt that councillors and Mayors do not need to declare their home address to the public.