

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
Audit and Standards Committee  
2 July 2020

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**REPORT AUTHOR:** SECRETARY/MONITORING OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** REVIEW OF CODE OF CONDUCT AND ANNUAL REPORT ON STANDARDS

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Background Papers: None

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		✓	FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known		OTHER (please specify)	
	New			

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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**PURPOSE:**

To consider any relevant issues regarding ethical standards that have arisen in the last twelve months and to review the Authority's Code of Conduct.

## RECOMMENDATION:

That:

1. the term of office of the existing independent persons be extended for 12 months until 31 July 2021.
  2. no changes are required to the Authority's Code of Conduct at this time but that the Code be reviewed when the LGA's Model Code of Conduct is formally adopted and published.
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### 1 Local Complaints

- 1.1 During the last year no complaints have been received concerning Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

### 2 LGA Model Code of Conduct

- 2.1 On 8 June 2020 the LGA published a draft model Code of Conduct which they introduced as follows:

*The role of councillor in all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. In voting for a local councillor, the public is imbuing that person and position with their trust. As such, it is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. The conduct of an individual councillor affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to and want to participate with. We want to continue to attract individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances who understand the responsibility they take on and are motivated to make a positive difference to their local communities.*

*All councils are required to have a local Member Code of Conduct. This Model Member Code of Conduct has been developed in consultation with the sector and is offered as a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments. The LGA will undertake an annual review of the Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, particularly with respect to advances in technology, social media and any relevant changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code,*

*whilst the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to town and parish councils.*

- 2.2 A copy of the draft Code is attached as an appendix to this report. The LGA are conducting a consultation on the draft Code (available via: <https://www.local.gov.uk/code-conduct-consultation-2020>) until 17 August 2020.
3. Appointment of Independent Persons
  - 3.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires all local authorities, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, to appoint at least one independent person. The Authority must consult an independent person before any finding is made that a Member has failed to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct and before the Authority decides on any action to be taken in respect of that Member. The Authority may also consult an independent person at any other stage in the process of managing a standards complaint (eg when deciding whether to investigate the complaint).
  - 3.2 The Fire Authority first appointed independent persons in September 2012 for a period of 4 years. At its meeting on 21 July 2016, the Authority approved the appointment of two new independent persons. These appointments were made jointly with Bedford Borough Council. In practice, as there have been no complaints in the last four years, it has yet not been necessary to consult these independent persons.
  - 3.3 The terms of office of the current independent persons expire on 31 July 2020. It is proposed that we continue to work in partnership with Bedford Borough Council on the appointment of independent persons. In view of the current situation regarding the pandemic, Bedford have decided to extend the terms of office of the existing independent persons for a further year and it is recommended that the FRA should do likewise.

**JOHN ATKINSON**  
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