



INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

Ariane Burgess MSP
Convener
Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

By email only to: localgov.committee@parliament.scot

3 April 2025

Dear Ms Burgess

Evidence before the Committee on 19 November 2024

I am writing further to your letter of 20 January 2025.

As agreed, the Standard Commission wrote to all Council Monitoring Officers asking them about training on the Councillors' Code of Conduct, especially for newly elected Councillors. We asked whether their local authority would be agreeable to making such training mandatory. We also asked Monitoring Officers to confirm whether their local authority currently provides this training within six months of a councillor being elected (and whether this is compulsory) and for information about the regularity of training provision and an indication of levels of uptake.

I am pleased to report a 91% response rate, with 29 of the 32 Councils providing the information sought. I am attaching a document outlining the responses received. In summary:

- All respondents confirmed that their elected members are provided with training within six months of being elected.
- Whether such training was designated as compulsory differed, with only around one third deeming it so. A number of respondents noted that while they did not have the statutory power to designate such training compulsory, attendance was strongly encouraged.
- The majority of respondents advised that refresher training was provided to their elected members, though the way in which this was delivered varied. Ten councils offered such training annually, or indicated they were planning to do so, with the remainder offering it less frequently or on an ad hoc basis, as and when required.
- Similarly, the majority of respondents confirmed that attendance at training events, including on the Code, was recorded.

I hope this information is useful. Please let me know if you have any queries or wish to discuss any of the contents of this letter further.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Vestri
Convener

Question 1 Does your council currently provide elected members with training on the Councillors' Code of Conduct within six months of a local government election?	Question 2 Is any such training designated as compulsory?	Question 3 How often (if at all) do you provide refresher training for elected members on the Councillors' Code of Conduct?	Question 4 Do you keep a record of attendance? If so, please provide an indication of the levels of uptake.
Yes. The main session following the 5 May 2022 local election took place on 10 May 2022. If a Councillor is elected through a by-election, their induction training also includes a session on the <u>Councillors' Code of Conduct</u> .	Yes.	This is generally provided on an annual basis, or where there is a major update to the Code or guidance. The last such training session was on 26 February 2024.	Unfortunately, a precise record of attendance was not taken at the last training session. However, an estimated 75 – 80% of Councillors attended the initial session in 2022.
Yes. The Councillor induction programme contains a number of opportunities where training is provided on the Code of Conduct. An overview is given on day 1 during the familiarisation day focussed on Registers of Interest. During the corporate induction usually day 2 or 3 there is a focussed session giving an overview of the whole Code of Conduct. Training sessions on good decision making, planning or licensing include Code of conduct implications in quasi-judicial matters. An online course has also been developed for elected members to complete either in its entirety, or for them to delve into particular issues at any time. All of our in person sessions are recorded for members who are unable to make the live session and can watch at a convenient time. This is also available for those who attended and want to refresh their memories.	No, but it is highly recommended. We find that newly elected councillors are very willing and receptive to the induction training. We would achieve 100% attendance at the induction of new councillors. Rates of attendance might drop off for other forms of training for members who will select what they require according to their ability, experience and availability.	Training is provided as and when required, i.e. if there is a by election, training sessions provided to new members are open to all members to attend as a refresher and to share experience with new members. The online course is available for members at any time as are the recordings as mentioned above. We are proactive in providing advice on the Code, and members regularly reach out for advice on interpreting the Code in their circumstances, but we do not have diarised refresher training.	We have an indication of attendance at the live sessions, and numbers accessing the online course however we do not keep a record of those who watch the recording in their own time unless the member logs it in their own CPD record. The percentage attending the live sessions, at an approximation, would be over 70% of councillors, with that being higher for a new intake of members who have not previously been members.
Yes, prior to the Statutory meeting.	No	Normally every 2-3 years. Regular updates via email are provided to elected member where appropriate.	Yes – 80%+
As part of the Council's induction programme we offer training to all of our Elected Members on the Councillor's Code of Conduct in the first few weeks following them being elected.	All Elected Members are provided details of the induction sessions in the pack which is issued to them at the Election Count. We actively encourage attendance but the general induction sessions (including the Code of Conduct session) are not compulsory. Only training which is required for Members dealing with quasi-judicial matters (such as Licensing) is deemed as compulsory as there is a requirement to undertake training before Councillors can undertake determination of applications. We would be supportive of any moves to deem the Code of Conduct training as compulsory.	We offer guidance to Members on a regular basis on the Code of Conduct and have provided refresher training recently which was delivered by the Standards Commission (approximately halfway through this term).	Yes, we record attendance at all training sessions. The most recent session with the Standards Commission was attended by 25 of our 36 Members (69%).

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Yes, Councillors' Code of Conduct training is a key feature of the new councillor induction programme, which usually takes place in their first few weeks in office, depending on availability. We would expect this to be completed well within six months.	Yes, Councillors' Code of Conduct training is compulsory, and candidates are advised of this requirement at the outset if they are successfully elected. This notification is advised to candidates and their agents ahead of an election by way of an induction outline email, and specifically in relation to Code of Conduct training: Code of Conduct - the Scottish Government/Standards Commission for Scotland: Code of Conduct for Councillors and guidance on the standards of conduct expected of councillors elected to office in Scotland. The Standards Commission for Scotland guidance on the Code of Conduct for Councillors is attached. All councillors must attend a briefing session on the Code. The timetable includes information on these sessions.	We do not currently provide full refresher training for elected members on the Councillors' Code of Conduct, however throughout the year, we will refresh sections of the Code in line with requests from councillors or where we identify skills gaps.	Yes, we maintain records of attendance and can confirm that following the Council elections in May 2022, all but one elected members completed the Councillors' Code of Conduct training. Members elected following this election, by way of a by-election have also completed the training. We plan to include the councillor who has not completed the training this term in our upcoming training programme for new councillors following the by-election of 23 January 2025.
An initial overview of the Code of Conduct was provided within the first six months of the 2022 local government elected. Following the new code of conduct being introduced in 2021 a further training session was provided to elected members by the Standard's Commission on 21 June 2022.	It could be argued that it is because it is part of our training programme for elected members when they come into post.	None but it is something that we should consider but it is down to capacity.	Yes but take up for any training sessions within this Council is low by elected members. However for the CoC it was 15 in total.
Yes, as part of the induction training provided when Councillors take up office.	We do not think it would be legally possible to insist that any training be stated to be compulsory, but the expectation that Members attend training on the Code of Conduct is indicated as though it were, and any Councillors who were not able to attend the training are approached and supported formally and individually. There have been no instances where Councillors have not received the training.	Refresher training is not provided collectively through a Seminar or equivalent, but Members receive regular emails from the Chief Officer, Law and Governance, advising of updates to the Code of Conduct, enclosing newsletters and bringing specific changes or individual cases to their attention.	We record attendance at all training events, seminars, and other informal meetings. The training for elected members on the Code of Conduct was attended by 24 of the 28 then-elected Members (there was one vacancy in the membership, subsequently filled at a by-election, and specific training was provided to the successful candidate).
The Council provide a comprehensive induction programme for Elected members which commences within days of their election. The programme includes a session on the Code of Conduct, good governance principles, standards in public life etc. All sessions are recorded and along with their slides are uploaded as a resource for members to refer to as they require. The session on the Code was our second session of the Induction Programme and held in their first week of office and accorded a high priority. Member training continues throughout their term of office with sessions held on a variety of matters and service specific items including mandatory training for any members sitting on the quasi-judicial bodies including Planning, Licensing, Employment Appeals etc.	Attendance at code of conduct training is not compulsory though members are strongly encouraged to attend whether they are newly elected or a returning member.	Training specifically on the Code is limited to the induction programme but members are kept up to date with the updates provided by the commissioner. From time-to-time briefings are issued to members to provide them with further advice for example on the continuing requirement to declare interests and the opportunity to make statements of connection, their rights to access to information etc. It is worth noting that the recording of the session and documents are available on the intranet for members so they have the opportunity to refresh their understanding whensoever they wish. Members being elected out-with the all-out elections via a By Election are directed to the resources available and also meet with the Monitoring Officer and Deputy MO where they are taken through the Code in addition to being briefed on how the council operates, what support arrangements are in place for them etc.	At the session immediately after the elections 21 of 43 members attended the session. The recording of the session and documents are however available on the intranet for members so those unable to attend can view the content at their convenience.
Yes	Yes	As and when appropriate	Yes. 100%

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Yes – this is included in the Councillors' Welcome Induction programme via our elearning platform – which should be completed within the first month of being elected. Extensive Face to face induction took place in May 2022 after local government elections which included this. They are also issued with a hard copy of the Code of Conduct in their 'pack' issued by Members Services. Councillors' also have access to the Improvement Service Notebooks one of which is Elected Member Induction Notebook 4 – Developing Your Working Relationship with Officers which also includes the Councillors' Code of Conduct.	Yes, this forms part of our Essentials Programme which is mandatory.	No refresher training as such but there is always the opportunity to go back into the elearning modules to review content. They also have the opportunity to meet on a group basis or 1-1 with the P&C Manager – OD to discuss anything in relation to their development/training.	Yes, uptake is 72%.
Yes – training is provided within the first couple of weeks given the importance and the need for Registers of Interest to be prepared within a month.	No – it is not possible for the Council to designate any training as compulsory, other than for Members of the Liquor Licensing Board (which is mandatory by law), however the importance is stressed and Members are encouraged to attend. The training is delivered online and recorded. The slides and recording are then shared with all Members	Ideally we run refresher training annually (and more frequently if there was a significant issue/concern, changes to the Code etc) We were unable to do this in 2024 due to the scheduling of the July General Election but training is scheduled for this year.	We do keep a record of attendance. It can vary e.g. post election attendance is generally high, however update sessions can vary significantly
Yes	Yes	Annually	Yes 2022 – 17 out of 22 Members 2023 – 13 out of 22 Members (4 members did not attend 2022 or 2023 session) 2024 – Session did not take place 2025 – scheduled 13 March 2025
Yes – all elected members are provided with a training session on the code within the first 2 weeks after the election – the training consists of a morning or afternoon session and is part of a wider raft of training sessions designed to cover other relevant issues such as data protection, chairing of meetings, info security etc	No (insofar as we have no power to compel attendance). It is badged as recommended but experience suggests that returning members are loathe to attend; new members are generally keen to attend	Refresher training is generally offered following any significant revisions of the code – this will not always take the form of face to face events and may often be constituted by issue of written information, signposting to 3rd party events and/or dispersal of documentation produced by other sources (once internally assessed as accurate and relevant)	We do keep records of attendance for physical events. Take up is (as previously noted) at almost 100% for new members. Approximately ¼ of returning members will attend as a refresher.
Yes, this is scheduled to take place within the first few weeks following a local election.	Currently we define the training as 'mandatory' and request that all the elected members attend the session, however we cannot enforce attendance.	We offer an annual refresher.	25/75 elected members attended the session following the local election in May 2022. 17/75 elected members attended the refresher session in February 2024. The next refresher session is planned for 4 March 2025 and a further session on Registers of Interest has been scheduled for September 2025. We are currently looking at ways to improve attendance at training sessions, with the caveat that the view of our elected members is that this training should be compulsory for newly elected members and recommended/optional for experienced/returning elected members.

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Yes, training sessions are run during the induction week for elected members immediately following the local government elections in May. All of the training sessions, including the Councillors Code of Conduct are offered to all new and returning elected members.	While we do not refer to any of our training sessions as compulsory, training on the code of conduct is one of the core training sessions offered to all elected members.	Refresher training sessions are offered each year and where training is provided to new elected members following a by-election, other elected members are given the opportunity to attend.	Training records are maintained for all training sessions provided to elected members, including the Code of Conduct. Uptake details are (no. of EMs trained/total no. of EMs): Code of Conduct – 75/85
Yes – training on the Councillors' Code of Conduct forms part of our programme of induction following local government elections. Members elected following by elections are given individual sessions on the Code of Conduct.	The training is not designated as 'compulsory.' It is made clear to all elected members that attendance at the training session on the Code is expected. The sessions are recorded and available for members to view in the members' Intranet.	Refresher training on elements of the Code has formed part of further sessions that have been offered to members on wider topics, most notably Governance. It is intended to offer a refresher session on Governance including the Code in spring 2025.	We do take a note of attendance at the session on the day but this will not capture members who choose to watch the recording.
Yes	Yes	As required but not at designated intervals	Yes. All elected members were trained on the Code. We have recently had one new elected member and training is currently being organised.
The Council provides training on the Code before the first meeting of the Council following the election and/or any bye-election. Yes	The training is not compulsory but Councillors are strongly advised to attend.	Refresher training is provided on an ad hoc basis, usually offered by officers following substantive amendment to Code or Guidance or on request from individual political groups.	A record of attendance is not kept but attendance is high (minimum of 15/18 councillors).
Pre election we do a session with prospective candidates where we alert them to the Code so when they sign their declaration of office they know what they are letting themselves in for. Post election we run an in induction week where all councillors are expected, but no required, to attend. This includes a 1.5 -2 hour session on the code of conduct	No we are not able to compel councillors	Quarterly SC briefings are distributed. Annual updates on specific areas. Encouragement to attend external (for example Improvement Service) training.	Yes our HR team keep records. Tends to be around two thirds.
Yes. The Council has an extensive induction programme in place following the local government election. The training on the Code of Conduct occurs on the first day of the training – usually the Monday following the election which takes place the previous Thursday. This training session also includes how the Council operates.	The general training is not compulsory however most Members attend. In the current Administration the only Members who did not attend that initial session were those who were re-elected and who had had a version of the briefing before. There is separate training for Members of the Planning and Licensing Committees and the Licensing Board. This includes a section on the Code of Conduct relating to Quasi-Judicial matters although there is greater focus on the remit of the Committee. The Council requires this to be undertaken as part of our processes prior to any Member sitting on these Committees. All Members of those Committees have attended our mandatory training. We would however not be able to enforce it – although to date, that has not been an issue.	Our initial training was carried out on 9 th May 2022. Refresher training for all Members on the Code was given in November 2024 – with fewer Members attending. It is intended that going forward this will be delivered on an annual basis. Standards Commission updates are issued.	Initial Training 9 th May 2022 - 21 Refresher training on Code of Conduct– November 2024 - 10 Planning Training May 2022 – 10 (all members of the Committee) Licensing Training May 2022 – 8 (all members of the Committee) – 2 Members subsequently appointed to complete the complement of 10 have received individual training. Planning refresher Dec 24 - 3
Yes. This was provided on 10 May 2022.	No, although all members are encouraged to attend.	Refresher training was provided on 26 October 2023. The intention going forward is to have annual refresher training sessions.	Yes. Each of these sessions had elected member attendance of approximately one third of the 77 members of the Council.
Yes.	Yes.	Normally, every two years.	Yes. 100%.
Yes. It is a specific session done prior to them signing their acceptance of office.	Yes	Where there are any changes to the Code or new advice issued. If conduct issues start to appear we will have briefing/ group discussions. The code is also discussed at Councillors Personal Development Discussions	Most recent session (facilitated by the Standards Commission) 25% uptake but session recording and link sent to all Councillors.

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Yes. We offer a detailed programme of training in the first full week immediately following the local government election. All candidates are supplied with a copy of the training programme so they are aware of it in advance of the election itself. Councillors are supplied on day one with an Information Pack containing essential information. This includes a full copy of the Commission's guidance on the Code of Conduct. A training session is provided on day three covering the Code of Conduct, Registering and Declaring and Interest, the Role of Councillors, the Member and Officer Protocol and Council's Scheme of Delegations and Standing Orders. This is then followed by a further training programme over the following 7 weeks.	No. We have no power to make any training "compulsory" for Councillors. However, Councillors are encouraged to attend, and the attendance rate for first time Councillors was close to 100% in 2022. The only training which is listed as "mandatory" or "compulsory" for Councillors is in respect of those on our Licensing Board, and this is imposed by statutory requirements.	At least annually. Training on other areas of interest to Councillors is provided throughout the year.	Approximately 20% of Councillors attend the annual refresher training.
Yes. Training on the Code of Conduct takes place during the formal induction training in the first 3 weeks after the local government election. Whenever a Councillor is elected at by-election they receive an individual training on the Code of Conduct within the first month of their term. These sessions <u>have never been resisted in my experience</u>.	While the induction programme is labelled "mandatory", the Council does not have the legal capacity to make it compulsory.	Around every 18 months.	No, I do not have a record. I would say that 2/3rds attend the training during the induction period and new elected members almost invariably attend that. Overall the attendance is probably around 2/3rds of Members at induction training. Around 1/3 attend refresher training.
Yes, this is covered as part of the induction process in the immediate aftermath of a local government election.	Councillors receive a copy of the Code of Conduct as part of their induction pack and are strongly advised to attend Code of Conduct training. Only that part of the Code of Conduct relating to councillors undertaking a quasi-judicial role is compulsory.	Refresher training is provided as required. There will be specific training at times for members who are part of the Regulatory Panel for Planning and Licensing matters in respect of their quasi-judicial role. There was a workshop on 10 September 2024 carried out by the Standards Commission on Councillors' Code of Conduct. All elected members were <u>invited and encouraged to attend</u>.	Yes, we keep a record of attendance. 20 out of 28 councillors attended the workshop referred to above.

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Yes. 5 sessions were held over 2 days on 11 and 12 May 2022. A recording of one of the sessions was uploaded to the Members' area of the Council's e-learning system, for access by Members at their convenience.	Yes. Councillors must attend one of the sessions held after new Council.	Refresher training was held on 21 January 2025 via MS Team which was recorded and is now available in the Members' area of the Council's e-learning system, for access by Members at their convenience. Any new Councillors appointed via by-election receive 1 to 1 training. Any materials on the Code of Conduct, such as Advice Notes and updated Guidance, are emailed out to all Councillors by the Council's Head of Administration and Legal Services, as are the Standard Commission's Standards Updates. Going forward refresher training will be offered annually to Members. Members receive other training/briefings throughout the year, including training which includes aspects of the Code. An example is training given to Members on their Role as a Board Member of an Outside Body/ALEO and Managing Multiple Roles, which was given on 10 December 2024.	Yes, a sederunt is taken at every training session. 100% attendance for May 2022 47% attendance for January 2025
Yes: part of induction training programme.	No, though we do encourage attendance. The law provides that Licensing training is mandatory.	If deemed necessary. Additional sessions were provided by the Standards Commission on: 23 October 2019, Standards Commission Training – Councillors Code of Conduct. 12 of 23 Elected Members attended. 27 January 2021, Standard Commission for Scotland Training Workshop. 17 of 23 Elected Members attended.	See above. 16 May 2022: Members' Induction Code of Conduct Training and Members' Induction Standards Commission Training, facilitated by the Standards Commission for Scotland. 17 of 23 Elected Members attended.
Yes, training is provided as part of the post-election induction training.	No, members who sit on committees that deal with quasi-judicial matters do, however, require to undertake mandatory training that covers, amongst other things, the provisions of the Code relevant to such matters.	At least once annually.	A record of attendance is kept. Level of uptake has ranged from 27 members to 13 members in respect of training sessions held in the period from 2022 – 2025.