

## ***Making a Complaint about the Conduct of a Councillor***

*The Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors (the Code) sets out principles and rules of conduct which councillors must observe. If you have evidence that a councillor may have breached the Code of Conduct you can complain to the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards (the Commissioner). The Commissioner is independent of government and the council and her investigations are conducted at no cost to complainants. You can find out how to make a complaint in this leaflet which also contains information on the Code and the process that applies to complaints received by the Commissioner:*

### The Commissioner's decision.....

If the investigation finds evidence that the Councillor is likely to have breached the Code, your complaint will be passed to the Commissioner for a decision.

The Commissioner will usually make a decision following a public hearing, during which she will review all of the evidence and hear from witnesses.

If the Commissioner finds that the Code has been breached, she can impose a sanction. This could involve censuring or suspending the Councillor. In the most serious cases, the Commissioner can disqualify someone from serving as a councillor for up to 5 years.

### Alternative ways of dealing with your complaint.....

The Commissioner can decide that carrying out an investigation or holding a public hearing is not the best way of resolving your complaint. The Commissioner may decide to deal with your complaint in another way, for example, by requiring the councillor to apologise to you or to attend training on the Code.

# Integrity Principles Duty Ethics Fairness Standards Values

Want to  
complain about  
a Councillor's  
Conduct?



Northern Ireland

**Local Government**  
Commissioner for Standards



Northern Ireland

**Local Government**  
Commissioner for Standards

Northern Ireland Local Government  
Commissioner for Standards  
Progressive House  
33 Wellington Place  
Belfast  
BT1 6HN

**Telephone:** 028 9023 3821 or

**Freephone:** 0800 34 34 24

**Text phone:** 028 9089 7789

**Email:** [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

[www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

We are a free and independent service set up to investigate complaints about the conduct of Councillors

## About the Code of Conduct.....

- The Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors (the Code) sets out the standards of conduct councillors must follow.
- If you have evidence that a councillor failed to meet these standards – you can make a complaint to this Office.
- The Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards (the Commissioner), who is also the Northern Ireland Ombudsman, considers complaints that councillors have not followed the Code.
- Only the Commissioner can decide if a councillor has failed to follow the Code and what action to take in such cases.

**The Code of Conduct applies when someone is acting in their role as a Councillor. Some parts of the Code can also apply to a councillor's behaviour in his or her private life.**

**You can find a copy of the Code on our website.**

## Making a complaint about a councillor's conduct.....

You must make your complaint to the Commissioner's Office in writing.

**Not all complaints that are made to the Commissioner's Office will be investigated. Your complaint will be assessed and a decision will be made based on the information you provide whether your complaint can, and should, be investigated. Make sure you include as much information as possible when submitting your complaint.**

You can get a complaint form by:



028 9023 3821 or

0800 343432 (Freephone)

or



by downloading a copy from our website:

[www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

## What happens next....?

If we decide that your complaint can and should be investigated you will be contacted by the investigator responsible for your complaint.

An investigation may include some or all of the following:



Examining relevant paperwork from the council



Considering newspaper reports and Social Media content such as Facebook and twitter



Interviewing witnesses (you may be interviewed about your complaint)



Considering recordings of council meetings or any relevant CCTV footage.