



Northern Ireland

**Local Government**  
Commissioner for **Standards**

## About our service - complaints about the conduct of councillors

### Information for Councillors

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) gives the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards (the Commissioner), the authority to investigate, and to adjudicate on, complaints that councillors have, or may have, failed to comply with the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors (the Code).

The Commissioner has delegated the authority to investigate alleged breaches of the Code to the Deputy Commissioner and the Local Government Ethical Standards (LGES) Directorate within this Office. The LGES Directorate's role is to receive, assess and investigate complaints; the Commissioner undertakes the adjudication function.

When someone complains to the Commissioner's Office that you have, or may have, failed to comply with the Code, the LGES Directorate will assess the nature and circumstances of the complaint to decide whether it is one that can, and should, be investigated.

If an investigation is undertaken, the LGES Directorate will take account of all the facts and evidence available to it, including what you and the person who has complained have to say.

If, having completed the investigation, the LGES Directorate decides that the available facts and evidence indicate that you may have breached the Code, it will ask the Commissioner to adjudicate on the complaint.

The Commissioner will adjudicate, following a public hearing, by deciding whether or not you have breached the Code and, if there has been a breach, what sanction, if any, should be imposed on you.

## Our service standards when dealing with a complaint about your conduct

We aim to:

- Inform you that we have received a complaint about your conduct, and tell you the name of the person who has complained, before we assess the complaint to decide whether we are going to conduct an investigation
- Tell you the name of the officer who will be dealing with the complaint
- Let you know within 20 working days of the date we receive the complaint<sup>1</sup> whether or not we are going to investigate
- Explain our reasons if we decide not to investigate the complaint
- If we do decide to investigate the complaint, give you an early opportunity to submit written comments on the allegation(s) made against you
- Undertake our investigation of the complaint in confidence, although we may publicise a summary of the investigation report and, if it is appropriate for the Commissioner to undertake an adjudication, there will be a public hearing<sup>2</sup> and the Commissioner's adjudication decision will be published
- Contact you at least every eight weeks during the investigation, by telephone, email or letter, to provide an update on progress
- Complete our investigation of the complaint within 48 weeks of the date we told you that we were going to investigate
- Notify you about the outcome of our investigation of the complaint, and explain the reason for our finding
- Process your personal information fairly and in accordance with the law
- Treat you at all times with respect and courtesy.

If you feel that the service you have received from us has fallen short of these service standards and you wish to complain, please contact the office or refer to our website [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk) to obtain information on our internal complaints procedure.

<sup>1</sup> Or within 20 working days of the date we receive all the information we need to consider the complaint, if this is later.

<sup>2</sup> The Commissioner may decide in certain circumstances, such as when confidential matters are to be discussed, to hear all or part of the evidence in private

## Your responsibilities

In dealing with a complaint about your conduct, we expect you to:

- Comply with any request we may make to you in connection with an investigation, and where appropriate, adjudication of the complaint, including:
  - a request for you to provide timely and complete responses to our enquiries
  - a request for you not to disclose confidential information relating to the investigation or the adjudication
- Not approach the complainant in relation to the complaint or any related investigation or adjudication
- Treat the Commissioner and her staff at all times with respect and courtesy.

## Our contact details

You can contact us in the following ways:

**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)

**Post:** Freepost NILGCS

or

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

**In Person:** by calling, between the hours of 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, at the Commissioner's Office at Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN.

This leaflet contains information that you may wish to refer to again while we are dealing with the complaint. You should therefore retain it until we have notified you that our work on the complaint has been completed.