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From Local Government Lawyer – 1 September 2017

[link to Local Government Lawyer website article](#)

Council calls for new powers to discipline councillors

Thurrock Council has written to the Communities Secretary Sajid Javid to request legislation for a new 'Right to Recall' councillors in the event of significant conduct or ethical breach, similar to that put in place for Members of Parliament by the Recall of MPs Act 2015.

The council said that it is also looking into the possibility of introducing its own recall scheme and has asked its monitoring officer to investigate ways that this could be established without new legislation.

Deputy Leader, Cllr Shane Hebb said: "The council's Monitoring Officer has been looking into the legalities of such a change, and I'm pleased there were many voices across the council chamber who were in favour of a higher form of accountability. "If changes were to be implemented then, should a councillor fall foul of an agreed set of criteria – like not attending meetings, conviction of a crime or breaching the members code of conduct – voters would have the choice to recall their representative and go to the ballot box to choose another candidate.

"As councillors, we are effectively immune from our residents calling time on any bad practices until a future election. It is the belief of this council that significant lapses of judgement and behaviour do warrant sanction far sooner in some instances, and that our bosses – the electorate – should have a say in calling time on such elected representatives."

The Localism Act 2011 removed many of the sanctions available to councils to discipline misbehaving members and a number of surveys of monitoring officers since then have found that the standards regime introduced by the act is considered inadequate to deal with code of conduct breaches.