



Standards Committee

Date: Tuesday 29 March 2022

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall

Membership

Cllr Clare Bowes
Cllr Nigel Dixon
Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris (Chairman)
Cllr Kay Mason Billig

Cllr Daniel Roper
Cllr Mike Sands
Cllr Tony White (Vice-Chairman)
NCC Chairman (Ex-Officio).

Ms Christine MacDonald
Ms Tracy Colman

Independent Person
Independent Person

**For further details and general enquiries about this Agenda
please contact:**

Nicola Ledain on 01603 223053
or email: committees@norfolk.gov.uk

Advice for members of the public:

This meeting will be held in public and in person.

It will be live streamed on YouTube and, in view of Covid-19 guidelines, we would encourage members of the public to watch remotely by clicking on the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyUrFjYNPfPq5psa-LFIJA/videos?view=2&live_view=502

However, if you wish to attend in person it would be most helpful if, on this occasion, you could indicate in advance that it is your intention to do so. This can be done by emailing committees@norfolk.gov.uk where we will ask you to provide your name, address and details of how we can contact you (in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak). Please note that public seating will be limited.

They will also be required to wear face masks when they are moving around the room but may remove them once seated. We would like to request that anyone attending the meeting does the same to help make the event safe for all those attending. Information about symptom-free testing is available [here](#).

Agenda

1. Apologies

To receive apologies and details of any substitute Members attending

2. Minutes

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To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021

3. Members to Declare any interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is on your Register of Interests you must not speak or vote on the matter.

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is not on your Register of Interests you must declare that interest at the meeting and not speak or vote on the matter

In either case you may remain in the room where the meeting is taking place. If you consider that it would be inappropriate in the circumstances to remain in the room, you may leave the room while the matter is dealt with.

If you do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you may nevertheless have an **Other Interest** in a matter to be discussed if it affects, to a greater extent than others in your division

- Your wellbeing or financial position, or
- that of your family or close friends
- Any body -
 - Exercising functions of a public nature.
 - Directed to charitable purposes; or
 - One of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union);

Of which you are in a position of general control or management.

If that is the case then you must declare such an interest but can speak and vote on the matter.

4. To receive any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency

5. Performance and Monitoring report

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Report by the Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer

6. Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct – Training Pack

Page 10

Report by the Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer

**7. Publication of the Government Response to the CSPL Review of
Local Government Ethical Standards**

Page 138

Report by the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

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Date Agenda Published: 21 March 2022



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Standards Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Monday 18 January 2021
at 10.00am

Present:

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris (in the Chair)
Cllr Claire Bowes
Cllr Dan Roper

Cllr John Ward
Cllr Tony White (Vice-Chairman)

Independent Members Present:

Mr A Squirrell
Mr S Jones

Also in Attendance:

Helen Edwards - Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Sarah Butikofer (Cllr Dan Roper Substituted) and Cllr George Nobbs.

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no interests declared.

4. Urgent Business

- 4.1 There was no urgent business to consider.

The Committee **agreed** to consider agenda item 6 (Performance and Monitoring Report) as its next item of business followed by item 7 (Appointment of Independent Persons).

5. Performance and Monitoring Report

- 5.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer updating it on matters of standards and conduct since the last meeting.
- 5.2 In introducing the report, the Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer

drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- The report covered the period from 11 July 2020 to 31 December 2020.
- Only one complaint had been received during the period, from a member of the public. There was no allegation that a specific paragraph of the code had been broken, but from the nature of the complaint it potentially fell into the category of a failure to treat with respect. The issue was complicated because comments were reported in the Eastern Daily Press, but on balance, and after discussions with the Independent Persons, it was felt that, although the EDP probably only interviewed the councillor because he was a councillor, his comments were made in his private capacity and not as a Councillor and therefore no further action was taken.

5.3 The Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to **note** the Council's performance in relation to Member standards and conduct during the period 11 July 2020 to 31 December 2020.

6. Appointment of Independent Persons

6.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer which updated them on the situation for the recruitment of the independent persons.

6.2 If for any reason the AGM did not take place in May, then the Committee would have to discuss again the recruitment of the Independent Persons.

6.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;

1. Extend the appointment of the current two independent persons until the end of April 2021 to allow for a recruitment process to take place early in 2021
2. Ask Officers to proceed with the recruitment process to appoint two new independent persons for a period of 4 years as from May 2021.

7. Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020

7.1 The Committee received the report by the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer which set out the proposed Councillor Code of Conduct from the Local Government Association.

7.2 The Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer introduced the report during which the following point was noted:

In appendix C of the report it referred to recommendations by the Committee on Standards and Public Life. The Local Government Association had clearly stated that if Government intended to implement any of those recommendations, it would require a change of primary legislation. Government had not introduced any legislation, probably due to the pressures of the pandemic, and as a result there had been no changes to the primary legislation. Therefore, the Director reported that some Local Authorities intended not to change their Code immediately and would wait

to see if the Government intended to introduce further legislation. There were also conversations happening about what best practice would look like and there was a general feeling nationwide that it could be too early to introduce this Code of Conduct.

- 7.3 There were no significant risks to the Council if the model Code of Conduct was not adopted and they remained with the current code until more information was announced from Government. The current code can be unclear at times and there is no definition of bullying, but it had worked reasonably well for the Council.
- 7.4 There were concerns raised about the proposed model code. The code references being banned from meetings if you declare an 'other' interest, which wasn't the case currently. There were also aspects of the code which needed amendment such as references to an appendix which didn't exist. However, it was felt that the model Code was well laid out and covered points that were not covered in the current code.
- 7.5 If adopted, the Code would be discussed at Council on 19 April 2021 when the completed review of the Constitution would be discussed.
- 7.6 The Committee considered the Model Councillor Code and Conduct from the Local Government Association and **RESOLVED**;
1. To recommend to Council that the code be adopted with the local amendments as follows;
 - To remove paragraph 6,7,8,9, 10 and table 2, and to remove any reference to unpaid directorship.
 2. That the Chair, vice-Chair and the Monitoring Officer look at the impact of adopting the model code of conduct on the appendices of the Constitution.

The meeting finished at 10.25am

Mark Kiddle-Morris
Chairman

Standards Committee

Report title:	Performance and Monitoring report
Date of meeting:	29 March 2022
Responsible Chief Officer:	Helen Edwards, Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer
Strategic impact To assist Members of the Standards Committee to fulfil their role in relation to ethical standards of the Council and its Members	

Executive summary

To update members on matters of standards and conduct since the last meeting

Recommendation: To consider the report

1. Introduction

1.1 At each meeting of the Standards Committee the Monitoring Officer provides a report to update Committee members on matters relating to standards and ethics.

2. Performance and Monitoring: 1 January 2021 to 21 March 2022

2.1 New Complaints during this period.

There have been five new complaints during this period:

- (i) Complainant: member of the public
Complaint: no specific element of the code was stated, but the complaint was consistent with an allegation of failure to treat with respect (complaining about a councillor's failure to respond to correspondence about a boundary dispute in a timely manner).
Date of complaint: 25 June 2021
Status: Monitoring Officer determined that the councillor had done as much as he could and the issue was being dealt with by officers, so there was insufficient evidence to warrant further investigation. No further action deemed necessary.
- (ii) Complainant: member of the public
Complaint: no specific element of the code was stated, but the complaint was consistent with an allegation of failure to treat with respect (claiming that the councillor had "lied" about passing on a complaint about an overgrown path).
Date of complaint: 11 August 2021
Status: Monitoring Officer accepted the councillor's explanation that he had passed the complaint directly to the Area Engineer. There was insufficient evidence to warrant further investigation. No further action deemed necessary.
- (iii) Complainant: two members of the public
Complaint: no specific element of the code was stated, but the complaints alleged that the councillor had been involved in "an illegal fox hunt".

Date of complaint: 21 December 2021

Status: There was no evidence presented of illegal activity, and in any event, it was very clear that at the time of the alleged incident the councillor was not acting in his capacity as a councillor, such that the code of conduct did not apply. No further action deemed necessary.

(iv) Complainant: member of the public

Complaint: no specific element of the code was stated, but the complaint (through the complainant's solicitor) is that the councillor is not fit to be a councillor and had failed to support a resident.

Date of complaint: 31 December 2021

Status: The complaint was sent to both the district and county council, as the councillor is a twin hatter. It is not clear from the allegations, which are vague, whether the councillor is alleged to have been acting in the capacity of a district or county councillor, and the complainant has so far failed to clarify the allegations.

(v) Complainant: member of the public

Complaint: no specific element of the code was stated, but the complaint was that the councillor had misled the public by making a false statement.

Date of complaint: 8 March 2022

Status: The Monitoring Officer checked the circumstances and responded that it was clear that the councillor was expressing an opinion, for which there was some evidence. The complainant has asked for further information which is being provided. No further action intended.

2.2 Involvement of the Independent Person

The Independent Persons were not consulted at the initial stages as the complaints were all clear cut.

2.4 Hearings

There have been no hearings of the Standards Hearings sub-committee during this period.

2.5 Register of Interests

The Register of Interests (consisting of the declaration of interests forms for all Council Members) is published on the Council's website.

2.6 Dispensations for Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

There have been no requests for dispensations during this period.

3. Recommendation:

That members of the Standards Committee consider the Council's performance in relation to member standards and conduct during the period 1 January 2021 to 21 March 2022.

officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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Standards Committee

Report title:	Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct – Training Pack
Date of meeting:	29 March 2022
Responsible Chief Officer:	Helen Edwards, Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer
Strategic impact To assist Members of the Standards Committee to consider the LGA training pack and how to incorporate this into training for Norfolk County Council members.	

Executive summary

Recommendation: To consider the LGA Model Code of Conduct Training Pack and consider how members wish to incorporate that into training for Norfolk Members, and also whether training should also be opened to any Norfolk councillors including District councillors.

1. Introduction

Every local authority is required to adopt a Code of Conduct in relation to the conduct of its elected members. The LGA produced a Model Councillor Code of Conduct and the Standards Committee considered this at its meeting on 18 January 2021. The Committee recommended that the Code should be adopted, with some amendments. This was adopted by Council at its meeting on 19 April 2021.

The LGA has since produced a standard training pack (included at App A) and the Committee is being asked to consider whether it wishes to adopt the pack, to be adapted for local use and the local Code, by the Monitoring Officer. The Committee is also asked to be consider who the training should be offered to.

2. Action Required

Standards Committee is asked to consider the LGA Code training pack and decide how the training should be adopted and rolled out.

3. Recommendation:

That members of the Standards Committee consider the LGA Training Pack and determine the actions that they wish the Monitoring Officer to take.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct Training Pack

Speaker's Notes

This document comprises the following sections:

Section 1: How to use the presentation

Section 2: General guidelines on training techniques

Section 3: Detailed notes to accompany the PowerPoint presentation

Section 4: Transcript of Lord Evans' opening comments

It is designed to be read and used by officers who are going to be presenting the material to councillors at your training session(s).

Please note that the material is not designed for councillors to use on their own for self-managed learning. It has been prepared to support a presentation delivered by officers (either virtually or face-to-face).

Section 1: How to use the presentation

The PowerPoint presentation in this training pack is designed to be adapted to your own council's needs. You can use it exactly how it has been prepared (if you have adopted the model code as it stands) or you can tailor it to recognise the particular context for the delivery of the material in your council. You will want to think about:

- Are you running this training as part of an induction programme for new members or are you delivering it to all members at the time of your adoption of the model code?
- Are you offering the training as one complete session or are you splitting the content between a number of sessions?
- Are you going to hold a face-to-face training event or are you going to use a virtual platform?
- Have you adopted the LGA model code in full or have you made adaptations to the content?
- Do you want to make the material more specific to your council, for example by adding references to your own protocols, adding your own branding or incorporating local references?

All these factors will guide any changes you want to make to the presentation.

It is based on a PowerPoint platform and is easily amended or augmented with your own material.

If your council does not use PowerPoint as your presentation platform, in liaison with your IT colleagues, you will be able to convert the material into a format which is compatible with your systems.

The final section of the presentation contains six mini scenarios. These have been developed to offer you choice in selecting which are most relevant for your council.

The notes highlight where there are sections you may choose to leave in or take out, depending on the time you have available and the issues you want to prioritise for your councillors. The material is comprehensive so allows you to cover aspects in detail, but it also contains summary slides which you may want to focus on if you have more limited time.

The final part of Section 3 gives more details on how you might choose to design your training session(s) drawing on different parts of the material.

Section 2: General guidelines on training techniques

Many officers using this training pack will be experienced presenters and will be very confident in delivering training to councillors. For you, these guidelines are suggested as a refresher or to suggest some new ideas and approaches.

For officers for whom councillor training is a new responsibility, these guidelines may assist in providing a basis for your planning and delivery of the session(s).

In advance, you will want to consider:

- What is the optimum time for the training? Some councils favour twilight training to encourage attendance and to recognise other commitments.
- Is the training to be virtual or (if COVID restrictions permit) face-to-face? There are pros and cons to this choice. Virtual training can be very successful in encouraging attendance and participation. But for new councillors, meeting their fellow elected members and officers will be an important part of induction. And face-to-face sessions often allow more debate and reflection on difficult issues.
- If you are holding a face-to-face session, is the venue accessible for all, including good acoustics/hearing loops? What is the best layout? If you have a choice, small tables of 5 or 6 allow for easy group discussion
- If you are holding a virtual session, think about using breakout rooms for the mini scenarios which will encourage contributions and is a quicker way to cover a lot of ground
- If the session is virtual you may want to record it (with participants' agreement). This allows councillors who could not attend the live event to watch in their own time
- What is the optimum number of attendees you can accommodate? And remember to invite your Independent Person(s).

At the session itself, these may be useful points to consider:

- Setting ground rules at the start for how delegates will behave, including showing respect for others' opinions, respect for the presenter, leaving cameras on if it is a virtual session and focusing on the training at all times (phones off etc)
- Encouraging everyone to contribute, particularly if this is an induction session where some new councillors may be daunted about raising questions or concerns in a group setting
- Thinking about how you interact with councillors – you will need to move the debate on given time pressures, but you need to make sure councillors feel that their points have been heard and acknowledged.
- When you are presenting, think about the following good practice in relation to accessibility:
 - Make sure you can be seen with good lighting, facing the camera.
 - Speak clearly so that participants and any interpreters can follow.
 - Use simple language; avoid jargon and acronyms.
 - Describe pertinent parts of graphics, videos, and other visuals.
 - Make sure you say out loud all the information on each slide.
 - Pause regularly to give people time to process information.

Ensure that you get feedback from the councillors, either at the end of the training or afterwards. It is important to learn from what went well and what could have been dealt with differently. The LGA will also welcome feedback on the use of the training pack – see introduction.

Section 3: Detailed notes to accompany the PowerPoint presentation

General

These speaking notes are designed to assist whoever is delivering the training. They highlight key messages, explain the opportunities for debate, and set out relevant background material etc. The notes do not attempt to replicate the detailed provisions of the Guidance on the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct (the guidance) (from which much of the training material is drawn) and you are advised to use the guidance alongside this training material to add further examples and content as you wish. A link to the guidance can be found in the Resource Document.

You may want to transpose the presentation into your council's corporate branding and/or import your council's logo and local photographs to make the material absolutely relevant for your council.

As stated in the Introduction to this training pack, the material covers all aspects of the model code and draws on lots of examples from the guidance. It has been produced in a way which will enable you to decide how to structure your training.

The presentation is divided into different parts which are clearly denoted by header slides. This will help you if you want to split the training into more than one session,

or if you want to take certain parts out – options for this are covered in the detailed notes below and there are some suggestions at the end of this section for various combinations of the slides to help you put together a session (or session) which will exactly fit what you need.

It is not expected that every council will want to use all the material contained in this pack.

Not all the slides have comments against them. The content of many of the slides are self-explanatory.

Slide 1 – Title

You may want to change the title of the presentation to reflect that the training is part of your induction programme or is the annual refresher training for all councillors etc.

Slide 2 – Purpose of the Training

You may want to tailor the purposes of the training to reflect any local circumstances and add to or change these priorities e.g.

- To introduce the provisions of the Council's recently adopted new code of conduct or
- To respond to a recommendation from the Standards Committee or a LGA Peer review.

Slide 3 – Overall aim of the training

No comments.

Slide 4 – LGA material

This slide makes clear that the training material has been prepared by the LGA and enables you to acknowledge the LGA's role in the development of the training pack when you introduce the session. If your council has adopted the code as it stands, and you have not made any further changes to the presentation, you can delete the second bullet point - the words in brackets.

If you have adapted the code (and therefore the presentation) and/or have added training material relating to your own council's protocols etc, you need to leave the words in brackets in. You can then explain (by adding text to the slide or verbally) how your presentation departs from the LGA material.

Slide 5 – The importance of standards in public life

This is a quote from the Committee on Standards in Public Life about the importance of standards in public life. It is important to start the training with an emphasis on why this topic is important – otherwise there is a risk that the sessions delve straight into the detail of the code and lose the bigger picture.

It will lead into the next slide....

Slide 6 – Lord Evans

This slide enables you to click on a recording of Lord Jonathan Evans of Weardale, the Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. He speaks for around two minutes on the importance of this training. It should set the session off to a strong start and reinforce for all councillors the reasons why they are attending. Sub-titles will be shown on the screen as Lord Evans speaks.

At this point in the training you will need to click on the link to the YouTube recording. The video will open automatically in a new window. Once the video has played, remember to close the YouTube link.

There is a transcript of Lord Evans' comments at Section 4 below. This will be helpful if you want to refer councillors back to what he said at any time in the training. It may also be helpful for any councillors who would prefer to have a written copy of his remarks.

Slide 7 – Main challenges as a councillor?

This is a question for debate by the councillors. It will take 10/15 minutes to cover this fully, depending on the number of delegates.

As well as engaging councillors at an early stage of the session, it allows you to hear directly about the issues of concern to the delegates. You can then tailor the rest of the material to prioritise these eg spending more time on social media or on member/officer relations.

If you are holding the sessions remotely, it can work very well to ask councillors to type their (short) responses into the chat facility on your remote platform. If you have any councillors who for accessibility reasons cannot use the chat, ensure that you invite them to speak as well.

If you are holding a face-to-face session, you can either simply ask for comments in the room (which could risk the more confident and experienced councillors dominating) or ask the councillors to discuss this for 5 minutes on their tables (see layout suggestions above) and feedback their top comments.

You might want to use flip charts and post-it notes to help councillors present their thoughts.

Once comments have been made, you can identify any themes emerging or pick up on a few of the specific comments and ask the councillor to expand on their points. But be careful of the timing! It is important that councillors feel their comments are not invalidated, but that you also move things forward constructively.

The type of issue which may emerge are

- Social media
- Public/private life
- Political differences leading to disrespect
- Unrealistic expectations of constituents

You may have some local issues which take over the debate and you will need to move the discussion on.

Once issues have been aired and you have explored them sufficiently (given time constraints) thank councillors for their contributions and say you will return to a number of the topics as the session progresses.

Slide 8 – the Model Code

This is background to the development of the model code.

You may want to refer to the CSPL's reasons for recommending a model code for local government in England:

“A model code of conduct would create consistency across England and reflect the common expectations of the public regardless of geography or tier. It would also reduce the potential for confusion among dual-hatted or triple-hatted councillors. As we discuss below, areas such as gifts and hospitality, social media use, and bullying and harassment have all increased in salience, and are not regularly reflected in local authority codes of conduct. All local authorities need to take account of these areas, and a model code of conduct would help to ensure that they do so”.

You may want to add the details of your council's adoption of the code here eg “adopted by the council at its meeting on xxxx”.

Slide 9 – Purpose of the Code

This is taken from the model code.

Slide 10 – General principles

Heading slide to introduce the next part of the session.

Slide 11 – Principles

You can mention Lord Evans' reference to the Nolan Principles.

If you have time, you might want to ask councillors if they can name the seven Nolan principles. This is a good way of engaging them to think about the substance of this. They can shout them out (if in the room) or put them in the chat. If councillors are sitting in groups in a face-to-face session, they can have two minutes to name them all, then give a prize for the team(s) with the correct answer. A few chocolates always go down well (and you can make a useful aside about gifts and hospitality).

The slide also references the new general principles which were developed as part of the model code to apply the Nolan Principles more specifically to the role of councillor.

Slide 12 – Nolan Principles

You may want to run through these and emphasize that all the provisions of the code are rooted back in these principles.

Slide 13 – General Principles

This slide and the next one cover the (new) general principles for elected councillors in the model code. This slide covers the principles which councillors are expected to follow at all times. The next slide covers principles underpinning their role as a councillor.

Slide 14 – General Principles

See above.

Slide 15 – Application of the code of conduct

Heading slide.

Slide 16 – The code applies ...

This is based on Section 27 (2) Localism Act 2011 and the content of the slide is taken directly from the wording of the code. It leads into the next few slides which cover the distinction between public and private life and also social media (where this issue often gets raised).

Slide 17 – The code applies to ...

The new code emphasizes that social media is caught by the code (which many previous versions did not) so you may want to emphasize this point.

Slide 18 – Quote on high standards

This is a quote from the code and reflects the aim that councillors apply these standards at all times (recognising that the legal application of the code is limited by the Localism Act – slide 15).

Slide 19 – Examples from the Guidance

This is the first slide which references the guidance (link in the Resource Document). The material cannot cover every example given in the guidance but picks up ones which will make the strongest relevant points. You can add others if there are examples which are more relevant to your council/circumstances.

It is worth pointing out to councillors that, although the examples are anonymised in both the guidance and in this training pack, they are all real-life examples which took place in local authorities.

Slide 20 – Social media

Social media is a hot topic in relation to standards, often in the context of whether a councillor was posting in their public or private life.

If your council has a social media protocol or guidance note, this would be a good place to include reference to it. You may also want to talk about your council's experience in relation to social media issues for councillors and code of conduct complaints.

Social media raises broader issues than simply code of conduct issues, for example, how to deal with aggression and intimidation as a councillor, the risks of breaching data protection law, the coverage of freedom of information and predetermination. These are wider topics than covered by this training pack, so you may want to signpost councillors to other guidance and/or other member development opportunities.

The relevant LGA materials on social media are linked through from the Resource Document.

Slide 21 – Examples from the guidance

This slide provides important examples in relation to the demarcation between public/private life.

If you have social media guidance for your councillors which, for example, encourages them to have separate accounts for their personal and council social media presence, this is a good point to emphasize that message and the reasons for it.

Slide 22 – General Obligations

Heading slide.

Slide 23 – Summary of obligations and question?

This slide is intended to generate a debate amongst the members. There are no official statistics on the subject matter of code of complaints in English local government. But the data from Wales and all the anecdotal information from England is that failure to treat others with respect is the basis of the most code of conduct complaints.

Councillors often assume that it is serious allegations of disrepute or failure to declare financial interests which are the most usual complaints. A focus on disrespect gives a good bridge into the next few slides which deal with that topic explicitly.

If you have a local issue with complaints on a certain topic eg breaches in confidentiality or attacks on the impartiality of officers, you could use this slide to generate a discussion on the local complaints rather than the national picture.

A pause on this slide also ensure that councillors have really read through the 10 headings which is a good basis for the next section of the training.

You may want to cover at this point, that a complaint about a member breaching the code must relate to one of these specific requirements governing their conduct or registration/declarations of interest. Complaints that are based on, for example, dissatisfaction that a member has not solved a casework issue to the satisfaction of a constituent, will not be the basis of a valid complaint.

If you are delivering a short introductory session on the code of conduct, you could simply focus on this slide which summarises the key provisions relating to behaviour and omit slides 24 to 43 below (which cover the detailed requirements of conduct).

Slide 24 – Standards of Conduct (1)

Respect. This is the first slide dealing with the standards of councillor conduct in the code. This section follows the same pattern - setting out the requirement then illustrating this with examples drawn from the guidance.

Treating everyone with respect is an important element of the required conduct of a councillor and one that is often contentious. You may want to dwell on this slide and open a discussion about whether the members are all clear on what constitutes respect and what becomes disrespect.

Disrespect can be alleged in difference circumstances:

- Between councillors
- Between councillors and officers
- Between councillors and members of the public

The guidance has a wealth of useful commentary on this issue which you will not have time to cover in detail. But you may find it useful to highlight the following:

- This requirement does not inhibit lively, passionate and forceful debate between councillors
- Nor does it stifle robust and reasonable challenge by councillors to officers
- The threshold for what constitutes disrespect when a councillor is talking to an officer is lower than in a councillor-to-councillor context
- There is an accepted concept of councillors needing a “thicker skin” when engaged in political debate – the following quotes from the Heesom case (see the Resource document) are helpful to stress this:

“Politicians are subject to ‘wider limits of acceptable criticism. They are expected and required to have thicker skins and have more tolerance to comment than ordinary citizens”

“In a political context, a degree of the immoderate, offensive, shocking, disturbing, exaggerated, provocative, polemical, colourful, emotive, non-rational and aggressive, that would not be acceptable outside that context, is tolerated”.

The balance between freedom of expression under Article 10 of the ECHR and the legitimate control of what is said and how it is said in public life, is a key issue. There are some useful cases which explore this issue in the Resource Document (Dennehy, Heesom, Calver and Robinson).

You may want to make the point that, even if examples of “offensive, shocking, emotive etc” behaviour between councillors may not constitute a breach of the code, councillors should always be aware of the principles underpinning their conduct and the impact of such behaviour on their reputation and that of the council.

Slide 25 – Examples from the guidance

No comments.

Slide 26 – Standards of Conduct (2)

Bullying harassment, equalities and discrimination. The guidance covers these obligations in some detail, and you may want to draw on some of its contents to expand on these requirements.

Slide 27 – Examples on bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment can be difficult issues to tackle, and these examples help to clarify that it is not just the intentions of the councillor which goes to whether their actions constitute a breach of the code.

Slide 28 – Examples on equalities and discrimination

No comments.

Slide 29 – Standards of Conduct (3)

Impartiality of officers. This is a good point at which to introduce your member/officer protocol and, particularly if this is an issue for you in your authority, to revisit the respective roles of members and officers and the importance of mutual respect.

The Heesom case (see Resource Document) has helpful content on the importance of officer impartiality.

Slide 30 – Examples from the guidance

No comments.

Slide 31 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (4)

This slide and the next one cover requirements re confidential information. The key message is that the councillor needs to think very carefully whether information they have is confidential before sharing/posting/releasing it and should consult with officers.

Councillors also have to be careful not to use information improperly and not to inhibit access to information which should be in the public domain.

Slide 32 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (4) cont.

See above.

Slide 33 – Examples from the guidance

No comments.

Slide 34 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (5)

Disrepute - you may want to emphasize that this is one of the most serious potential breaches of the code.

Slide 35 – Examples

No comments.

Slide 36 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (6)

Improper advantage. No comments.

Slide 37 – Examples from the guidance

The second example is an extremely serious one (but it is also worth noting that it occurred in 2004, so nearly 20 years ago).

Slide 38 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (7)

Use of resources. No further comments.

Slide 39 – Examples from the Guidance

No comments.

Slide 40 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (8)

Cooperating with code of conduct issues and not intimidating. No further comments.

Slide 41 – Protecting reputations

Heading slide for the next section of obligations which have a separate sub heading in the code relating to the protection of reputation.

Slide 42 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (9)

Registering and declaring interests. It would be helpful to explain here that this issue will be dealt with in detail in the next section of the training or, if you are splitting the training into more than one session, in a separate training session.

Slide 43 – Standards of Councillor Conduct (10)

Gifts and hospitality. Your council may have its own provisions relating to this area. If so, you will want to refer here to any protocol, guidance, planning codes or different thresholds for registration etc.

The full wording of the requirement is not included on this slide which precises the provisions.

An important message to convey here is that the perception by the public of the impact of the receipt of a gift or hospitality is as important as its value or the intention in the giving or receiving.

Slide 44 – Registration and declaration of interests

Heading slide introducing the next section on interests.

Slide 45 – Question on interests

This is an opportunity to pause and encourage the councillors to highlight any areas of concern they have in relation to the registration and declaration of interests.

There may not be any, in which case you can move on quickly. If councillors do identify any issues, it is probably best not to try to answer them here, but to acknowledge them and ensure that you cover them as you go through the material on interests.

Slide 46 – Interests

This slide summarises the different types of interests which the code deals with. It's also important to ensure that councillors understand that some interests have to be registered, some disclosed and some both.

Before you get into detail about what interests councillors have to register and disclose, this is good point to look at the bigger picture. You can emphasize that the purpose of the requirements relating to interests in the code are to uphold standards of public life, to ensure decisions are made for the right reasons and to protect the councillors themselves against allegations.

You might also want to introduce, at this point, the fact that the model code makes an important differentiation between when an issue “directly relates to” something and when it “affects” it.

If you are running a short introductory session on the code and do not have time to go into detail, you could omit slides 47 to 68 and rely on the summary slides (69 to 73 below). But this means that you will miss a lot of the detail of key provisions relating to interests which will need to be covered at some stage, especially with new members.

Slides 47 and 48 – Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

These slides cover DPis, drawing straight from the code.

It is important to emphasize two messages here to councillors

1. The interests of your spouse/partner are as important as yours
2. Failure to comply with these provisions can constitute a criminal offence and there have been examples of councillors who have been prosecuted and convicted under this legislation.

Slides 49 and 50 – Guidance and examples of DPIs

These are important examples from the guidance, and you may want to dwell on them and ensure councillors understand this issue clearly. Two of the mini scenarios pick up DPIs as well.

Slides 51 and 52 – Other Registerable Interests

This and the next slide cover ORIs and draw straight from the code.

Slide 53 – Examples of ORIs

Self-explanatory.

Slides 54 to 56 – Non-registerable Interests (“directly relates to”)

These slides deal with NRIs where the matter “directly relates” to an interest. The references to “relatives” and “close associates” need to be picked up and explained. The guidance gives useful advice/examples on what constitutes a relative and close associate, and you may want to refer to this in more detail here.

These are the start of the detailed provisions relating to the declaration of NRIs. These interests can be the most difficult area of interests for a member to identify and deal with. You need to work through them in some detail (especially if this is a training session for new members). The guidance provides lots of useful material to draw on at this stage of the training.

Slides 57 to 59 – Non-registerable Interests (“affects”)

These slides introduce NRIs where the matter “affects” an interest.

Slide 58 (“the test”) is a key provision in the code and can be challenging to explain and understand. It would be good to pause on this slide and analyse what the test is saying. Elements to be considered are:

- What is the affected ward?
- How might the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants be affected? (note that it is the effect on their financial interests which is to be assessed, not their wellbeing)
- Does the issue affect the relevant financial interest or wellbeing to a greater extent than the financial interest of the majority of the inhabitants?
- What are all the facts a reasonable member of the public would need to know?
- How might that person believe the issue would affect your view of the wider public interest?

Slides 60 to 63 – Examples of NRIs

These slides work through the different aspects of NRIs where something “affects” an interest. **Slides 62 and 63** contain four examples of situations where the test needs to be applied. You could ask the members for their answers to these situations. The conclusions reached in the guidance on these examples are set out here:

Slide 61

- **A major development proposal affects the ward where your sister lives. She lives at the other end of the ward rather than next door to the development.**

Your sister would be no more affected than anybody else in the ward so the answer to the first part of the test is no. You do not have to go on to the second part. So you must disclose the interest, but you can stay, participate and vote.

- **You help to run a food bank and the council is considering a motion to investigate the causes of poverty in the area.**

This could affect the financial position or wellbeing of a body of which you are a member, or an associated person, more than it affects the financial interests of the majority of the affected ward, so the answer to the first part of the test is yes. You then have to go on to the second part – would a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts think that this would affect your view of the wider public interest? Probably not in this case, so disclose the interest but you can stay, participate and vote.

Slide 62

- **You are over 65 and are taking part in a discussion about provision for older people. You would be more affected than the majority by the outcome of the discussion.**

The answer to the first part of the test is yes, but would a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts think that this would affect your view of the wider public interest? Probably not in this case, so disclose the interest but you can stay, participate and vote.

- **You are discussing closure of the local authority run care home where your father lives.**

The answer to the first part of the test is yes, but would a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts think that this would affect your view of the wider public interest? Probably yes in this case, so disclose the interest, leave the meeting, do not participate or vote.

Slide 64 – Well-being

Examples from the guidance on well-being issues.

Slide 65 – Interests as a Cabinet Member

You should omit this slide if you do not have an executive governance system which involves cabinet members having individual decision-making powers.

Slide 66 and 67 – Sensitive interests

If you have any issues in your authority relating to, for example, the withholding of addresses of councillors from registers because of social media threats, this is the place to discuss this and to reinforce the importance of councillors identifying any concerns to the Monitoring Officer.

Slide 68 – Dispensations

If you have standing/general dispensations relating to, for example, housing, school meals, members' allowances, these should be explained here.

Slide 69 – Summary of interests

Heading slide.

Slides 70 to 73 – Summary of Interests

These slides pull together the overall impact of the provisions on interests. They repeat and summarise the information in the previous slides, but you may find it helpful to use these to reinforce the messages.

If you feel that you have covered the issues sufficiently in the more detailed slides above, you may choose not to include these summary slides.

Slide 74 – Bias and predetermination

Heading slide

Slides 75 to 77 – Bias and predetermination

These slides deal with the concepts of bias and predetermination. If you have specific reference to this anywhere else in your constitution (for example it is often covered in more detail in a Planning Code) do cross refer to this.

Slide 78 – Section 25 of the Localism Act

This is the exact wording of s.25. You may want to make the point that, although this is a helpful clarification, it does not change the basic legal

position that councillors should not be participating in decisions where they have a closed mind.

Slides 79 and 80 – Examples from the guidance

These are self-explanatory. The second example is useful to introduce the challenges for twin hatted members who need to ensure that they do not predetermine themselves in one role which rules them out of participating in the other.

You may also want to draw on useful practical examples from the wealth of case law on this topic – see the Resource Document for cases such as Persimmon Homes, Island Farm etc.

Slide 81 – Roles and process

Heading slide.

You may omit this and the subsequent two slides if you do not want to cover this issue in the training on the code.

Slide 82 – Role of the Monitoring Officer

You may want to tailor this slide to give the contact details for the officer(s) in your council who will deal with member inquiries on conduct issues. This will be particularly important in induction training for new members to encourage them to seek early advice on interests etc.

Slide 83 – Arrangements for dealing with complaints

It is not within the scope of this training pack to cover the procedure for dealing with standards complaints in detail. But this slide contains an overview of the usual procedure in English local government. You need to check that this accurately reflects your own arrangements or tailor it to set out your own procedures.

If you are intending to cover the complaints procedure in more detail, you may want to add some slides and material at this stage of the session dealing with, for example

- Initial consideration of complaints
- The role of the Independent Person
- Local resolution
- Hearings
- Sanctions

Slide 84 – Mini scenarios

Heading slide.

The next section contains six mini scenarios.

There are suggestions at the end of this section as to how and when you may want to use the scenarios in your training.

You will spot that the scenarios involve popular characters in a well know TV soap. This is to liven the examples (and avoid inadvertently using the names of real councillors). You may want to change these names to make it more relevant/local to your council, or you can just use Councillor A, B, C etc – this is a matter of personal choice.

The comments below set out the suggested “answers” to the scenarios and highlight issues which the scenarios will enable you to raise.

Slide 85 – Weatherfield Council

Scenario 1

Weatherfield Council has recently changed hands. At the first Council meeting the Mayor, Councillor Ken Barlow, loses control of the proceedings. Councillors start shouting over each other and ignoring rulings from the Mayor. They are strongly critical of the politics and policies of the opposing groups and make disparaging remarks about members and senior officers. The press describes the meeting as “shambolic”.

This scenario enables you to discuss what constitutes disrespect and what is legitimate, though heated and passionate, political debate. You should ask councillors for their reaction to this situation and whether there are any problems with it.

Ignoring rulings from the Chair/Mayor is not acceptable and councillors need to recognise the reputational damage (as evidenced by the press report) that this disrespect may do to them and to the council.

This should be distinguished from acceptable political debate – making critical comments about opposition politics and policies is probably acceptable (depending on the language used). But making disparaging remarks about other members is probably disrespectful and making such comments about officers is not acceptable.

You can refer to the notes to slide 23 above which cover politicians needing a thicker skin and what constitutes legitimate debate.

Members might want to discuss issues including what would happen in practice in such a situation. You can touch on the role of officers to advise and the critical role of a good chair in maintaining order at such a meeting, the benefits of an adjournment to calm things down etc.

You might also want to ask councillors what they would suggest happens at Weatherfield Council now. This will enable you to have a discussion about who is responsible for standards of conduct. The discussion should address the role of individual members to uphold high standards of their peers and also the role of political groups. You may well want to address the role of a good chair in helping to ensure order and high standards, and you could touch on the role of the Monitoring Officer.

The scenario also allows you to explore whether the situation would be different (and if so, better, or worse?) if the meeting had been virtual and not held in the council chamber. Councillors may have views on whether high standards of conduct are more easily maintained in a live or virtual meeting.

Slide 86 – Councillor Sally Webster

Scenario 2

The new Leader of the council, Councillor Sally Webster, calls the Chief Executive into her office and says that things must change. She tells him she is determined to sort out “all the deep-seated problems” she has inherited. In her Leader’s Blog, she posts that her party is going to sort out all the “dead wood” at the Council. The former Council Leader, Councillor Roy Cropper, responds robustly on social media calling Councillor Webster a “stupid woman”.

This scenario also enables you to explore what constitutes respect and what crosses the line.

You can ask councillors if there is anything wrong with (1) what Councillor Webster has said and (2) what Councillor Copper has said in response.

A private meeting between the Leader and the Chief Executive is a setting where pretty forceful, robust discussion is acceptable. However, going public with comments referring to “dead wood” brings in potential disrespect to officers who are no position to respond. Any concerns about officer performance or failure to implement new policies are matters for the Leader to take up privately through the proper routes.

You might want to prompt members to consider how they would raise issues of concern about performance or confidential matters and with whom. You can refer to your officer/member protocol if appropriate and the need to use the proper procedures/channels.

Councillor Cropper’s response is clearly not helpful. It is not particularly extreme language, but the “stupid woman” comment could be seen as sexist

and demeaning which may constitute disrespect. It is directed at the individual characteristics of Councillor Webster and not at her policies or opinions.

Slide 87 – Councillor Leanne Battersby

Scenario 3

Councillor Battersby keeps two twitter accounts – a personal one (LeaB) and one in the name of Councillor Leanne Battersby. She posts the following on her personal account:

“I was outraged at the planning committee last week. I voted against the dreadful application for the windfarm but was outvoted by idiotic opposition members who swallowed the unprofessional report written by officers who are in the pocket of the developer. These are my personal views”.

You can ask councillors (1) if they think Councillor Battersby was covered by the code of conduct when she made the post and (2) if so, did her comments breach the code.

This scenario raises the issue of when the code applies to a councillor. Councillor Battersby has said that she is making the comment in a personal capacity on a personal twitter account. But it clearly relates to council business and makes observations on issues she is dealing with as a councillor. So, the conclusion would probably be that she is covered by the provisions of the code. The point to emphasize is that calling yourself a councillor or not, is not conclusive in determining if the code applies.

If the code applies, her comments about officers are certainly a problem, particularly the inference about corrupt links to a developer which are disrespectful. Irrespective of action under the code of conduct, this comment should be followed up with her to make clear how serious an allegation it is and that she should come forward with any evidence about this or withdraw the remarks. If she persists in making serious unfounded allegations, this could constitute bringing her office into disrepute.

Calling opposition members “idiotic” is not civil and not to be encouraged, though, on its own, might not warrant a disrespect finding, given the need for councillors to have a “thicker skin” in political debate.

You might want to ask councillors what Councillor Battersby could have done differently?

Slide 88 – Councillor Ken Barlow

Scenario 4

Councillor Barlow is the Mayor, and his family are major landowners in the area. He votes at the Planning Committee in support of an

application for development on land which he realises, after the meeting, borders land owned by his wife. The grant of planning permission arguably adds value to her land. Councillor Barlow realises that he had completely overlooked his wife's ownership (which he was aware of) and it is not included in his register of interests. He apologises profusely.

Ask the councillors if they think Councillor Barlow has breached the code or not. If so, how, and what should now happen?

The response needs to recognise that this failure to register his wife's ownership of the land looks to be a breach of the Localism Act which requires that councillors register DPIs relating to their own, and their spouses' interests, within 28 days of election. He has potentially committed a criminal offence.

In addition to his failure to **register** the interest, Councillor Barlow's participation in the vote needs to be examined. As the planning application relates to neighbouring land (and not land owned by him or his wife) he has not further breached the Localism Act's requirements by voting, as the issue being discussed (the application on adjoining land) does not directly relate to the interest he should have registered (his wife's ownership of the land).

[You may want to ask the councillors if the situation would have been different if part of Mrs Barlow's land had been included within the red line of the planning application. The answer is yes. He would have voted on a matter which directly related to his DPI, so his failure to disclose it, leave the room and not vote, would be a breach of the code and another potential criminal offence].

Even if Mrs Barlow's land was not within the planning application site, Councillor Barlow should have considered if he had an NRI. Did the matter being discussed directly relate to or affect the financial interest of a relative?

It did not **directly relate to** (as discussed above) but it would seem that the matter **affected** his wife's ownership of the land (and arguably also his financial position or well-being) so he should have disclosed it. Whether he could then remain in the meeting would depend on the answer to the following test:

Did the matter affect the financial interest or well-being of his wife/him (a) to a greater extent than the financial interests of a majority of inhabitants of the affected ward and (b) would a reasonable member of the public, knowing all the facts believe that it would affect Councillor Barlow's view of the wider public interest?

It would seem likely that this would be answered yes, so after disclosing the interest, his only involvement could be by availing himself of a public speaking opportunity. Otherwise, he should not have participated in any discussion, not voted and left the room. He could only have stayed and discussed/voted on

the matter if he had obtained a dispensation (and it is difficult to see on what grounds that could have been given).

Councillor Barlow's contrition about the situation does not absolve him from responsibility nor from a potential code of conduct complaint or a prosecution.

Councillor Barlow is Mayor and there may well be a view that it is going to harm the reputation of the office and the council for him to continue in this public role.

There may also be an issue with the validity of the planning permission which was granted with Councillor Barlow's (improper) involvement. This is an opportunity for you to emphasize to members that participating in decisions where they should have withdrawn (because of conflicts, bias or predetermination) not only puts themselves at risk of consequences, but also makes the council's decision susceptible to legal challenge.

Slide 89 – Councillor Audrey Roberts

Scenario 5

Councillor Audrey Roberts' husband is employed by a local firm – Weatherfield Materials Limited. Cllr Roberts notices that there is an item on the agenda for a forthcoming committee meeting about awarding some contracts. One of the contracts is proposed to be granted to WML. What if it was not her husband who works for WML but her nephew, whom she hasn't seen for years?

You can ask councillors whether they think that Councillor Roberts has any interests, if so, what kind and what should she do.

The important point is that Councillor Roberts' husband's interests are as important as her own. His employment with WML constitutes a DPI for her which she should have registered. If she hasn't done so she should do so immediately. If she is on the committee awarding the contract, the matter directly relates to her husband's financial interest and constitutes a DPI. She should disclose her interest and withdraw, not participating in the discussion or vote (unless she has a dispensation).

It is a criminal offence to fail to register a DPI, to fail to disclose a DPI if it is not on the register and to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which you have a DPI.

The position with her nephew's involvement is different. This is not a DPI (which only relates to spouses/partners) but it is a potential interest. Councillor Roberts needs to ask herself if this is a matter which relates to the financial interest or well-being of a relative. What is a 'relative' is not defined in the code. A nephew, whom she hasn't seen for years, is arguably too distant to warrant being a concern. In reaching a conclusion on whether her nephew is a relative or close associate for the purposes of the code, Councillor Roberts

needs to consider whether the interest might be objectively regarded by a member of the public acting reasonably as potentially affecting her responsibilities as a councillor.

If so, she needs to disclose it.

If the award of the contract **directly relates** to the financial interest of the nephew (and it would seem likely to do so) she also needs to withdraw from the meeting, not take part in the discussion and not vote (unless she speaks as a member of the public or she has a dispensation).

If the Councillor concludes that the award of the contract might only **affect** the financial interest of her nephew, after having disclosed it she could stay and participate in the discussion and vote, unless the matter affects her nephew's financial interest or well-being (a) to a greater extent than the financial interests of a majority of inhabitants of the affected ward and (b) a reasonable member of the public, knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect her view of the wider public interest.

You can prompt councillors to consider what factors they would take into account in coming to a decision eg the impact of the contract award on her nephew's employment, the closeness of the relationship etc. The perception of the impact of this interest on her judgement is crucial.

If she decides it is an interest which fails the test, she must withdraw from the meeting, not take part in the discussion and not vote (unless she speaks as a member of the public or she has a dispensation).

You could also use this scenario to open up a discussion about confidential information. Councillor Roberts is clearly party to commercially sensitive information about forthcoming contracts where family members have interests. She needs to understand how important it is to keep information confidential.

Slide 90 – Councillor Mike Baldwin

Scenario 6

Councillor Baldwin is passionately in favour of an application which is coming to the Planning Committee. He thinks that it will bring jobs to the area and provide homes for local people. He says that his son and daughter-in-law cannot afford to buy a property in the town and this development may help them. He is also a member of 'Local Homes for Local People' a campaigning group trying to bring affordable housing into the area.

You should ask councillors if they think Councillor Baldwin has acted properly and whether he should be able to take part in any decisions on the planning application.

This scenario provides a basis for a discussion on predisposition, predetermination and bias.

It also raises the question of whether Councillor Baldwin's mention of his son and daughter-in-law exposes an interest which he needs to declare. If he is mentioning his family in general terms to exemplify the difficulty for all young people in the area of obtaining affordable housing, this probably needs disclosing, but he may reasonably conclude that it does not require him to withdraw from any decision. But if, for example, his son has registered with the developer to be in line for one of the houses once built, the decision on the planning application would directly relate to his close family's financial interest or well-being and would need him to withdraw from the debate and not vote.

Councillor Baldwin's involvement in 'Local Homes for Local People' is an interest he should have registered as an ORI. His membership could create a perception of bias but this may depend on the exact aims of the campaigning group. If Councillor Baldwin has spoken publicly about the specific planning application in unequivocal terms, he also risks being seen as predetermined and would be prudent to step back from any decision on it.

Slide 91 – Conclusions and close

You may want to round the session off by checking that councillors have had all their questions addressed or if not, note them for a follow-up.

You could ask councillors if there are any other issues on which they want training and/or identify any other follow-up actions eg circulation of any codes/protocols.

Circulate feedback forms or explain how feedback will be collected and thank everyone for attending!

Use of the material

As explained above, this training pack covers all aspects of the model code of conduct and draws extensively on the guidance. As such, there is a wealth of material which, if presented in full, including all the suggested opportunities for discussion/engagement, would warrant around a ½ day training session. This may fit your plans. But it is more likely that you will want to use the material as a source to draw on, to design your own training session or sessions. This will help you to deliver training which is appropriate for the context (eg induction) or for the particular priority area you wish to focus on (eg an in-depth look at interests following concerns expressed by the Standards Committee).

The material has been prepared to enable you to do this easily, with self-contained parts dealing with different aspects of the topic, and with clear headings in the presentation to differentiate these.

Here is a summary of what is covered in the PowerPoint presentation, broken down into 12 parts:

Part	Topic	Slide Nos.
Part 1	Introduction and purpose of the training and comments from Lord Evans	1 to 6
Part 2	Opening question for discussion and background to the code	7 to 9
Part 3	General principles of councillor conduct	10 to 14
Part 4	Application of the code of conduct	15 to 21
Part 5	General obligations and summary slide	22 and 23
Part 6	Standards of councillor conduct	24 to 40
Part 7	Protecting your reputation	41 to 43
Part 8	Registration and disclosure of interests	44 to 68
Part 9	Summary of interests	69 to 73
Part 10	Bias and predetermination	74 to 80
Part 11	Roles and process	81 to 83
Part 12	Mini scenarios	84 to 91

This table should enable you to identify the key parts of the presentation which best fit your requirements.

The following are some suggested “Set Menus” which might help you to shape your own training.

Menu One – suitable for a short initial introduction to the subject, perhaps at induction.

Allow 1 hour approximately.

Part	Topic	Slide Nos.
Part 1	Introduction and purpose of the training and comments from Lord Evans	1 to 6
Part 3	General principles of councillor conduct	10 to 14
Part 4	Application of the code of conduct	15 to 21
Part 5	General obligations summary slide	22 and 23
Part 9	Summary of interests	69 to 73

Menu Two – suitable for a more detailed look at standards of behaviour

Allow 1 ½ hours approximately

Part	Topic	Slide Nos.
Part 1	Introduction and purpose of the training and comments from Lord Evans	1 to 6
Part 2	Opening question for discussion and background to the code	7 to 9
Part 3	General principles of councillor conduct	10 to 14
Part 4	Application of the code of conduct	15 to 21
Part 5	General obligations and summary slide	22 and 23

Part 6	Standards of councillor conduct	24 to 40
Part 7	Protecting your reputation	41 to 43
Part 12	Mini scenarios 1, 2 and 3	85 to 87

**Menu Three – suitable for a focus on interests, bias and predetermination
Allow 1 ½ hours approximately**

Part	Topic	Slide Nos.
Part 1	Introduction and purpose of the training and comments from Lord Evans	1 to 6
Part 7	Protecting your reputation	41 to 43
Part 8	Registration and disclosure of interests	44 to 68
Part 9	Summary of interests	69 to 73
Part 10	Bias and predetermination	74 to 80
Part 12	Mini scenarios 4, 5 and 6	88 to 90

**Menu Four – an overview of the complete code (including roles and process)
but without using the mini scenarios
Allow 2 hours approximately**

Part	Topic	Slide Nos.
Part 1	Introduction and purpose of the training and comments from Lord Evans	1 to 6
Part 2	Opening question for discussion and background to the code	7 to 9
Part 3	General principles of councillor conduct	10 to 14
Part 4	Application of the code of conduct	15 to 21
Part 5	General obligations and summary slide	22 and 23
Part 6	Standards of councillor conduct	24 to 40
Part 7	Protecting your reputation	41 to 43
Part 8	Registration and disclosure of interests	44 to 68
Part 9	Summary of interests	69 to 73
Part 10	Bias and predetermination	74 to 80
Part 11	Roles and process	81 to 83

Of course, you are free to mix and match the material in any combination which works for you and your council.

Section 4: Transcript of Lord Evans' opening comments

Hello, I am Jonathan Evans, and I am Chair of the independent Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Our Committee comprises both independent members and three senior political appointments, and our job is to uphold high ethical standards in public life. And those standards are built on what are called the seven principles of public life, sometimes known as the Nolan principles, of honesty, objectivity, openness, selflessness, integrity, accountability, and leadership.

And it is important and anybody in public life is expected to live up to those seven principles. And those principles have also stood the test of time because they have been enshrined in our public life for over twenty-five years.

The new model Code for local government is built on those principles and we are delighted to see that that has now been promulgated and that the Local Government Association has committed to providing advice and support and training in the new model Code. And I am delighted that you are taking part in that training today.

It is also important to recognise that decisions in local government are often not straightforward. They can be complex, and they can be nuanced. When taking your decisions, you will be in a stronger position and you will be able to justify what you have done more effectively if you have based your decision making, and can demonstrate that you have based your decisions, on those seven principles of public life. And of course, there is always advice available to people on how best to factor in that sort of principled ethics into decision making.

I would like to thank you for taking part in the training. I would like to thank you for the fact that you have stepped forward and are taking part in local government. Local government affects the lives of everybody in this country and delivers important services. Thank you very much for taking part and contributing to that, and I hope that you find this training helpful.

LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct Training Pack

Introduction

Why high standards in public life matter

In its report on Local Government Ethical Standards published in January 2019, the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) said:

“Local government impacts the lives of citizens every day, providing essential services to those it serves. Its decisions directly affect the quality of life of local people. High standards of conduct in local government are needed to demonstrate that those decisions are taken in the public interest and to maintain public confidence”.

The Local Government Association (LGA) reinforced this message in the Joint statement to councillors made in the introduction to its Model Councillor Code of Conduct:

“The role of councillors across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country’s system of democracy. It is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role”.

“The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area, taking decisions fairly, openly and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet those expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.”

This training pack has been developed to assist officers deliver high quality training to councillors on this vital topic.

The background to the development of the LGA Model Code and Guidance

Recommendation One of the CSPL Report on Local Government Ethical Standards (the CSPL report) was that:

“The Local Government Association should create an updated model code of conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government”.

The LGA, in association with key partners and following extensive consultation with the sector, published a Model Councillor Code of Conduct (the model code) in December 2020. The development of the model code is part of the LGA’s work in

supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance, and the LGA's Civility in Public Life programme.

A key finding from the consultation on the model code with the sector was the need for guidance and training to support councils and councillors embed the principles of the model code.

In July 2021 Guidance on the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct was published (the LGA guidance). The purpose of this guidance was to help the understanding of, and consistency of approach towards, the model code.

The importance of training on this topic

The CSPL report stressed the importance of training for councillors as a key means of reinforcing the importance of standards in public life:

“Expected standards of behaviour should be embedded through effective induction and ongoing training. Political groups should require their members to attend code of conduct training provided by a local authority.”

The CSPL also commented on the optimum approach to training on standards:

“To be successful, induction training should not be dry or compliance-focussed but should set out the rationale for high standards in public life and should be scenario-based so that councillors can engage with concrete examples and see the relevance of standards to different areas of activity in which they might be involved”.

Although the CSPL comments refer specifically to induction training, the LGA endorses this approach for **all** councillor training relating to standards and conduct and the training pack has been prepared in this context.

The development, purpose and intended outcomes of the training pack

Following the development of the model code and guidance in consultation with members and officers, this training pack has been developed to support member training.

This training pack has been prepared to enable officers to deliver high quality and effective training to councillors on standards of conduct. It supports the LGA's aims to clearly articulate the standards expected of anyone engaging in public and political discourse and debate, and what is needed to achieve those standards.

The training pack is designed to be usable by all principal local authorities which have adopted the model code or a variation of it. The pack has been created so that it can be adapted to suit each council's purposes.

Please note that the material is not designed for councillors to use on their own for self-managed learning. It has been prepared to support a presentation delivered by officers (either virtually or face-to-face)

The intended outcomes of any training delivered using the pack are that:

- Councillors have an opportunity to reflect on the challenges of upholding high standards of conduct and to work through practical examples
- Councillors have a better understanding of the principles of good councillor conduct and how their authority's code applies to them and
- Councillors feel immediately more confident in the expectations of behaviour required of them and how to meet these.

The desired outcomes of the overall programme of training by local authorities using the training pack are that:

- Councillors' behaviour and standards are improved
- Complaints against councillors are reduced
- Councils' and councillors' reputations are better protected and
- Prospective councillors are not put off from standing for election due to poor behaviour of councillors.

The contents of the training pack

The pack contains the following parts:

Part 1: This Introduction

Part 2: The PowerPoint presentation

Part 3: Speaker's notes to support the delivery of the training

Part 4: Resource document containing links to useful sources/material

This Introduction is provided as useful background for officers who are organising, or who may be personally delivering, the training. It is not intended to be part of any training material shared with councillors.

The PowerPoint presentation forms the core part of the material. Its content is designed to be drawn on and adapted for your use, whether you have adopted the model code as it is drafted or to cover your own specific code and circumstances.

The **Speaker's notes** cover four things:

Section 1: How to use the presentation

Section 2: General guidelines on training techniques

Section 3: Detailed notes to accompany the PowerPoint presentation

Section 4: Transcript of Lord Evans' opening comments

Again, these notes are for your background and to support you in delivering the training and are not intended for sharing with the councillors.

The transcript of Lord Evans' comments is included as an accessibility tool.

The **Resource document** is primarily for your background information and is intended to be an easy way of accessing useful source material. You can share this with the councillors attending the training if you think this would be helpful. If so, you may want to add links to your own documents or references including:

- Your own code (if this differs from the model code)
- Your procedure for dealing with complaints
- Any relevant protocol or other code including
 - Gifts and hospitality
 - Officer/member protocol
 - Planning code of practice
 - Social media guidance

How the training pack can be used by each local authority

The training pack covers all aspects of the model code and draws on lots of examples from the guidance. It has been produced in a way which will enable you to decide how to structure your training. You may choose to run one training event or a number of different sessions focusing on different aspects of the code eg standards of behaviour, interests etc. The material is structured in a way to enable you to select the most appropriate content to meet your needs, and to put this together into a comprehensive presentation.

Further details of how you may want to tailor the presentation are contained in Part 3: Speaker's notes.

The training pack has been prepared for use by principal councils when delivering training to their own members. It therefore does not address issues or challenges specific to parish or town councillors, but can be adapted.

The training pack focuses on the core contents of the model code; it therefore does not cover the detailed procedure for dealing with standards complaints, hearings sanctions etc. It does refer at very high level to the usual way of dealing with a standards complaint. If you want to adapt or expand this section of the material to cover your own arrangements in detail, this should be easy for you to do. However you should consider the additional time this will add to the session.

The material has been prepared on the assumption that the officer presenting the training has reasonable experience of dealing with code of conduct issues and working with elected members.

Contact details for feedback

It is important that we get feedback on the training pack so that we can review and improve it in the future.

If you have any comments or suggestions, or would like to let us know how the training material was received in your council, please do contact:

Modelcode@local.gov.uk

The LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct

[Your Council]

Purpose of the training

- To reflect on the importance of standards in public life
- To outline the provisions of the local authority's code of conduct
- To look at the requirements of behaviour and conduct for councillors
- To explore interests, bias and predetermination

Overall aim of the training

- That all councillors gain an excellent understanding of the provisions of the code and feel immediately better equipped to carry out their roles effectively and lawfully

Preparation of this training material

- The LGA has prepared this presentation for use by any council to support the introduction and implementation of codes of conduct based on the Model Code
- [The material has been changed to reflect our own code and our own circumstances in the sections relating to.....]

The importance of standards in public life

“Local government impacts the lives of citizens every day, providing essential services to those it serves. Its decisions directly affect the quality of life of local people. High standards of conduct in local government are needed to demonstrate that those decisions are taken in the public interest and to maintain public confidence”

The Committee on Standards in Public Life

Introduction and welcome from Lord Evans of Weardale Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life

[You Tube link](#)

**What are the main challenges
for you as a councillor in
ensuring high standards of
conduct?**

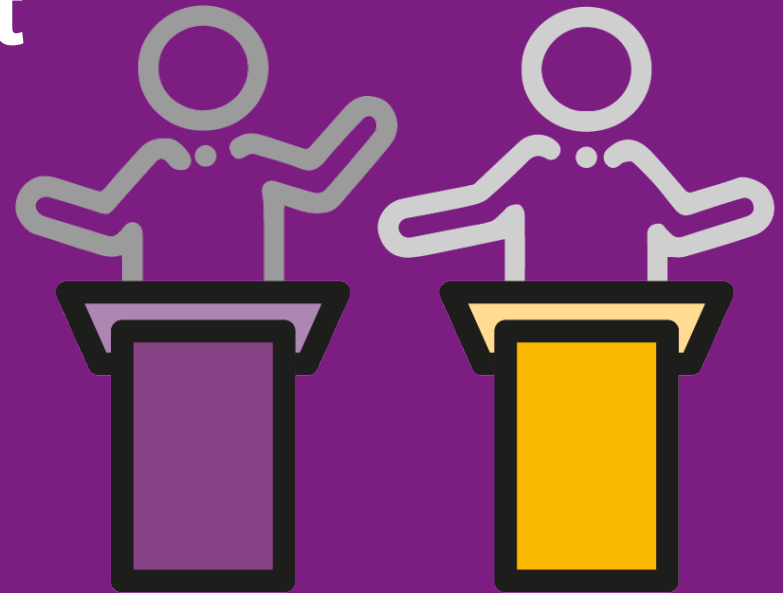
The LGA Model Code

- The Committee on Standards in Public Life recommended the introduction of an updated model code in January 2019
- The LGA model code was introduced in December 2020 following extensive consultation
- Guidance was issued in July 2021

Purpose of the code

- To assist councillors in modelling the expected behaviour
- To provide a personal check and balance
- To set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you
- Also to protect you, the public, your fellow councillors, officers and the reputation of local government

General principles of councillor conduct



Principles

- Everyone in public office at all levels who serve the public or deliver public services should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles
- The Model Code also includes **general principles** which were developed specifically for the role of councillor

The Nolan Principles

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

General Principles (on all occasions)

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor

General Principles (in undertaking your role)

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with the local authority's requirements and in the public interest

Application of the code of conduct



The code applies...

- When you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when.....
 - You misuse your position as a councillor or
 - Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts, that you are acting as a councillor

The code applies to

- Face-to-face meetings
- Online or telephone meetings
- Written communication
- Verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments

“You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor”

Examples from the Guidance

- An argument with your neighbour – private
- A councillor and an officer having a personal relationship – covered by the code
- Writing on council notepaper or using council e mail, using councillor business cards or wearing council regalia – covered by the code
- An argument with a taxi driver and a threat to their licence – covered by the code

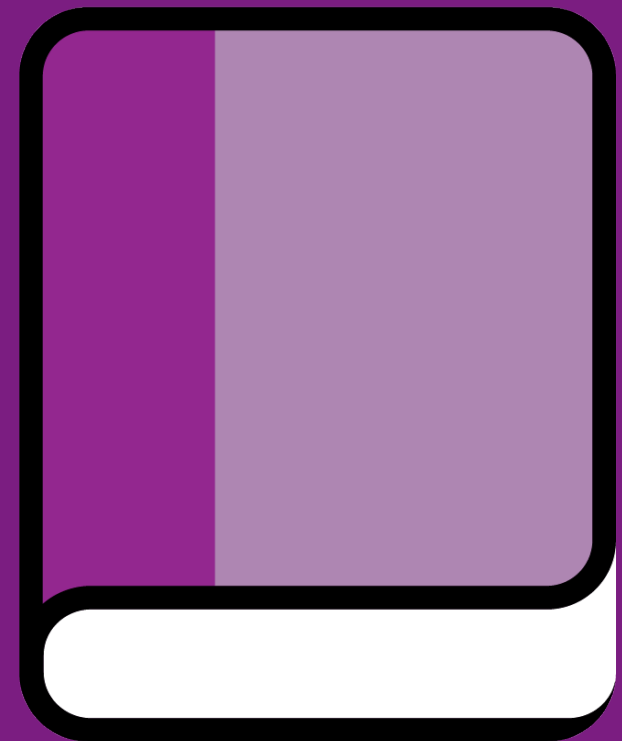
Social Media

- Now explicitly covered by the code
- Can be the main source of code of conduct complaints in many local authorities
- Useful guidance is available from from the LGA on dealing with social media

Examples from the Guidance

- Calling yourself a councillor (or not doing so) is not conclusive
- There must be a link within the posting or thread to your role as a councillor or to local authority business
- Councillor posted on Facebook (as a member of the public) that an officer should be sacked – covered by the code
- Councillor made insulting remarks about the Prime Minister – not covered by the code

General obligations under the code of conduct



Which of these do you think generates the most complaints?

1. Treating others with respect
2. Not bullying, harassing or discriminating
3. Not compromising the impartiality of officers
4. Dealing properly with information
5. Not bringing the council or your office into disrepute
6. Improper use of your position
7. Improper use of resources
8. Cooperating with code of conduct issues
9. Registering and disclosing interests
10. Dealing properly with gifts and hospitality

Standards of Councillor Conduct (1)

- I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect
- I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with respect and respect the role they play

Examples from the Guidance

- Highly critical comment and offensive caption posted about a councillor who had recently died – disrespect (and disrepute)
- Comments on a blog about nepotism in the award of contracts – disrespect (and disrepute)
- Councillor made abusive insulting and personal remarks to a police officer in his capacity as a ward member – disrespect

Standards of Councillor Conduct (2)

- I do not bully any person
- I do not harass any person
- I promote equalities and do not discriminate against any person

Examples from the Guidance on bullying and harassment

- Isolated minor incident unlikely to be bullying, but cumulative minor incidents can be
- Did the councillor know their actions constitute harassment, would a reasonable person consider the actions to be harassment and what was the impact on the victim
- At an official event, a councillor made unwarranted and inappropriate physical contact with councillors and officers and made patronizing and demeaning comments – this was a breach of the code

Examples from the Guidance on equalities and discrimination

- Councillor “liked” racially discriminatory comments on social media advocating violence against travellers – a breach of the code
- Councillor made a derogatory racist comment about a candidate for a job – a breach of the code

Standards of Councillor Conduct (3)

- I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority

Examples from the Guidance

- Councillor became involved in a social care case and inappropriately sought to influence operational decision making. He sent discourteous correspondence to officers
- Councillor sought to influence the decision of council officers dealing with a complaint by his son and daughter-in-law against a tenant
- Both were breaches of the code

Standards of Councillor Conduct (4)

- I do not disclose confidential information unless...
 - I have the required consent
 - I am required to do so by law
 - I need professional third-party advice
 - The disclosure is reasonable, in the public interest, in good faith, complies with the local authority's requirements and there has been consultation with the Monitoring Officer

Standards of Councillor Conduct (4) (cont.)

- I do not improperly use knowledge gained as a result of my role
- I do not prevent lawful access to information

Examples from the Guidance

- Councillor was involved in an adoption case and inadvertently shared information about the matter with a relative of the constituent – a breach of the code
- Councillor circulated information about the medical condition of an officer without consent – a breach

Standards of Councillor Conduct.(5)

- I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute

Examples from the Guidance

- Councillor posted an offensive tweet about another councillor referring to the SFO investigating her conduct – this brought the authority into disrepute
- Councillor took advantage of a mistake and failed to prevent local authority employed contractors working on his (privately owned) home – this brought the authority into disrepute
- Chair of a council made a deeply inappropriate remark at a meeting. Many other councillors expressed concerns and found the remarks inappropriate – this brought his office (but not the authority) into disrepute

Standards of Councillor Conduct (6)

- I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else

Examples from the Guidance

- Councillor discussed and voted on a new lease to a community group without revealing that she was the “joint co-ordinator” of the group – this was using her position improperly
- Leader failed to declare a conflict of interest and used his position to enhance the value of his own land (by instructing a planning officer re the route of a by-pass) – a breach of the code (and an 18 month prison sentence)

Standards of Councillor Conduct (7)

- I do not misuse local authority resources.
- I will use them in accordance with the local authority's requirements and will not use them for political purposes (unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or my office)

Examples from the Guidance

- Councillor used council computer equipment for private purposes by downloading pornographic images – this was a misuse of resources (and also disrepute)
- Councillor used council notepaper in an attempt to avoid parking penalties incurred by his son – this was a breach of the code (and a conviction for deception)

Standards of Councillor Conduct (8)

- I undertake standards training
- I co-operate with any standards investigation and/or determination
- I do not intimidate/attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of an investigation or proceedings
- I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a breach finding

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority



Standards of Councillor Conduct (9)

- I register and disclose my interests

Standards of Councillor Conduct (10)

- I do not accept gifts and hospitality, irrespective of value, which could give rise to gain or concern
- I register any gift or hospitality of £50 or more with the MO within 28 days
- I register with the MO any significant gift or hospitality I have been offered but rejected

Registration and disclosure of interests



**Which aspects of
registering or disclosing
interests do you find
most challenging?**

Interests

- Three types...
 - Disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs)
 - Other registerable interests (ORIs)
 - Non-registerable interests (NRIs)
- Two situations...
 - Registration
 - Disclosure

Disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs)

- They relate to things such as your employment, interests in land, contracts with the Council etc. (Table 1)
- They cover interests of you and of your spouse/partner
- You must register them within 28 days of election and whenever your position changes
- It is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011 to fail to register DPIs, to fail to disclose them at meetings, to participate or vote where you have a DPI or to provide false or misleading information about them

DPIs (2)

- Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to a DPI, you must disclose it, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and not remain in the room (unless you have a dispensation)

Guidance on DPIs

- You have a DPI where the matter being discussed directly relates to your registered interest rather than just affecting it
- If you live at 1 Acacia Avenue, you will have a DPI if you apply for planning permission for 1 Acacia Avenue or if the whole of Acacia Avenue is being considered for a Residents' Parking Zone.
- You will not have a DPI if 3 Acacia Avenue has put in a planning application (though you may have a NRI)

Examples from the guidance – DPIs

- Awarding a contract to your own company
- Planning application for your own property
- Resident parking zone includes your house
- All these are DPIs, so you you should disclose and withdraw (unless you have a dispensation)
- Criminal offence if you fail to do so – Section 34 of the Localism Act 2011

Other registerable interests (ORIs)

- Relate to unpaid directorships, membership of outside bodies, charities, lobby groups, TUs, political parties etc. (Table 2)
- Must register them within 28 days of election/appointment to office and whenever your position changes

ORIs (2)

- Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of an ORI, you must disclose it
- You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have a dispensation
- (See later for what to do if something **affects** one of your ORIs)

Examples from the guidance – ORIs

- Awarding/withdrawing grant funding or granting planning permission to a body of which you are a member e.g. community hall
- Both directly relate to the finances of an ORI.
- Both are therefore interests you should disclose, you should not participate in the discussion or vote and withdraw (unless you have a dispensation or the public can address the meeting)

Non-registerable interests (NRIs) “directly relates to”

- Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates to** your financial interest or well-being (and is not a DPI) or to a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose it.
- You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have a dispensation

Examples from the guidance

- Determining an application submitted by your sister or your neighbour for a dog breeding licence
- Partner with free parking permit and policy review decision to be made
- You object in a private capacity to your neighbour's planning application

Examples from the guidance

- All these three **directly relate to** the finances of you, a partner, relative or close associate
- All are therefore interests you should disclose and you should not take part in any discussion, not vote and not remain in the room, (unless you have a dispensation or the public can address the meeting)

Non-registerable interests (NRIs) “affects”

- Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** your own financial interest or well-being or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate or of a body included in your list of “Other Registerable Interests”
- Disclose it, but you can remain in the meeting, participate and vote unless...

Non-registerable interests (NRIs)

“The test”

- ...the matter affects the financial interest or well-being
- (a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of a majority of inhabitants of the affected ward and
 - (b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

Non-registerable interests (NRIs)

The consequences...

- If so, you may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have a dispensation

Examples from the guidance

- Awarding grant funding to a competitor to a community hall, where you are on the membership committee
- Application for housing development on land near to partner's business property
- Your neighbour applies for planning permission
- These examples **affect** the finances or well-being of an ORI or a relative/close associate ...

Examples (cont)

- So apply the test –
 - Does it affect the finances or well-being more than the finances of the majority of inhabitants of the ward and
 - Would a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest?
- If so, these are interests you should disclose, not participate in the discussion, not vote and withdraw (unless you have a dispensation or the public can address the meeting)

Applying the test - what do you think?

- A major development proposal affects the ward where your sister lives. She lives at the other end of the ward rather than next door to the development.
- You help to run a food bank and the council is considering a motion to investigate the causes of poverty in the area.

Applying the test (2)

- You are over 65 and are taking part in a discussion about provision for older people. You would be more affected than the majority by the outcome of the discussion.
- You are discussing closure of the local authority run care home where your father lives.

Examples from the guidance – well-being

- Road works noise outside your house
- Odours from nearby tip
- Anti-social behaviour from rough sleepers housed in B+Bs nearby
- These are not financial issues but could affect your well-being/quality of life, so apply the test

Interests as a Cabinet Member

- Where you are a Cabinet member and are going to decide a matter in exercise of your executive function, if you have a DPI, an ORI or a NRI in the matter, you must notify the Monitoring Officer and not take any steps to deal with it (other than arranging for someone else to deal with it)

Sensitive interests

- An interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with her/him, being subject to violence or intimidation
- Where you have a sensitive interest you must notify the Monitoring Officer with reasons and, if the MO agrees, they will withhold the interest from the public register

Sensitive interests (2)

- When a sensitive interest arises at a meeting, you have to disclose that you have an interest, but not the nature of it

Dispensations

- The Localism Act sets out circumstances in which the council can grant a dispensation, so allowing a councillor to vote and/or speak in a meeting where they would otherwise have had to disclose an interest and withdraw.
- Standing dispensations

Summary of interests



Summary of interests (1)

If something **directly relates** to

- your DPIs
- the financial interest or well-being of an ORI
- your financial interest or well-being (which is not a DPI) or
- the financial interest/well-being of a relative or close associate ...

Summary of interests (2)

- You must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion and leave the room
- You can speak on a matter if you have a dispensation
- You can speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting (except if it relates to a DPI)

Summary of interests (3)

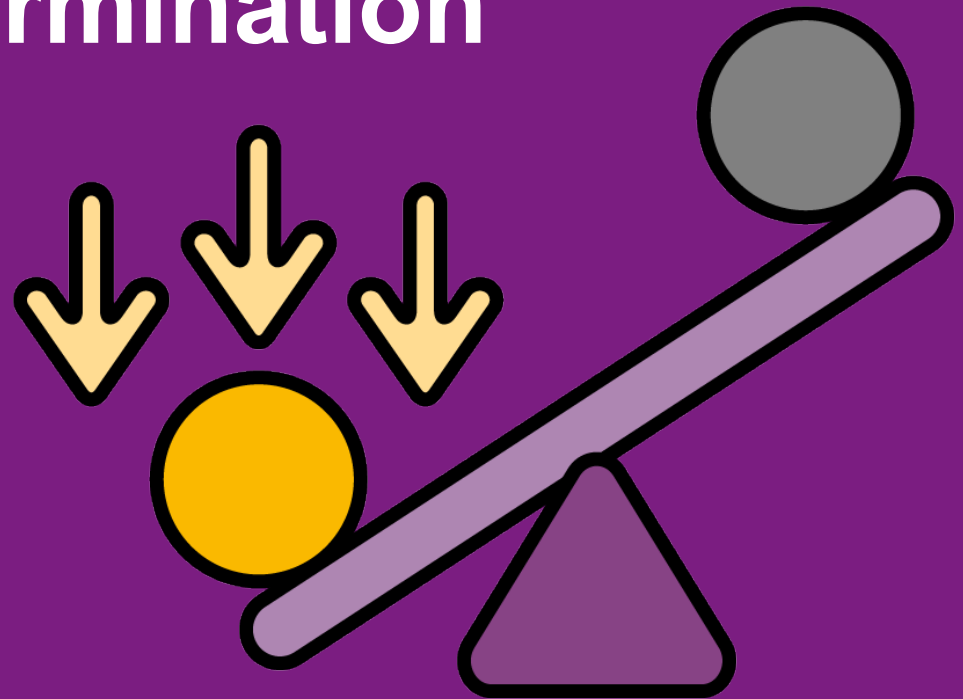
If something **affects**

- your financial interest or well-being
- the financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate or
- the financial interest or well-being of an ORI ...

Summary of interests (4)

- You must disclose the interest. You can stay, speak and vote **unless** you/they are affected to a greater extent than most people **and** people would think your judgment might be clouded
- If so, you must not participate in any discussion and leave the room (though you can speak if you have a dispensation or if the public are allowed to)

Bias and predetermination



Bias and predetermination (1)

- Not explicitly covered in the code of conduct
- But they are important legal concepts to ensure that decisions are taken solely in the public interest and not to further any private interests

Bias and predetermination (2)

- Bias – where a decision maker’s connections make it appear that there is a real danger of bias when s/he makes the decision
- Pre-determination – where a decision maker has completely made up his/her mind before the decision is taken.

Bias and predetermination (3)

- The risk in both cases is that the decision maker does not approach the decision with an objective, open mind
- This makes the local authority's decision challengeable (and may also be a breach of the code of conduct by the councillor)

Section 25 Localism Act 2011

- An elected or co-opted member is not to be taken to have had, or to appear to have had a closed mind when making a decision just because the decision-maker had previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view the decision maker took or would or might take in relation to a matter and the matter was relevant to the decision

Example from the guidance (1)

- A councillor said publicly that he was “inclined to go along with” a barrister’s recommendation in relation to a TVG application. He then voted on the decision making committee. Probably predisposition and not predetermination.

Example from the guidance (2)

- A district councillor also belongs to a parish council that has complained about the conduct of an officer of the district council. The officer has been disciplined. The officer has appealed to a councillor panel and the councillor seeks to sit on the panel hearing the appeal
- The councillor should not participate

Roles and process for dealing with code of conduct complaints

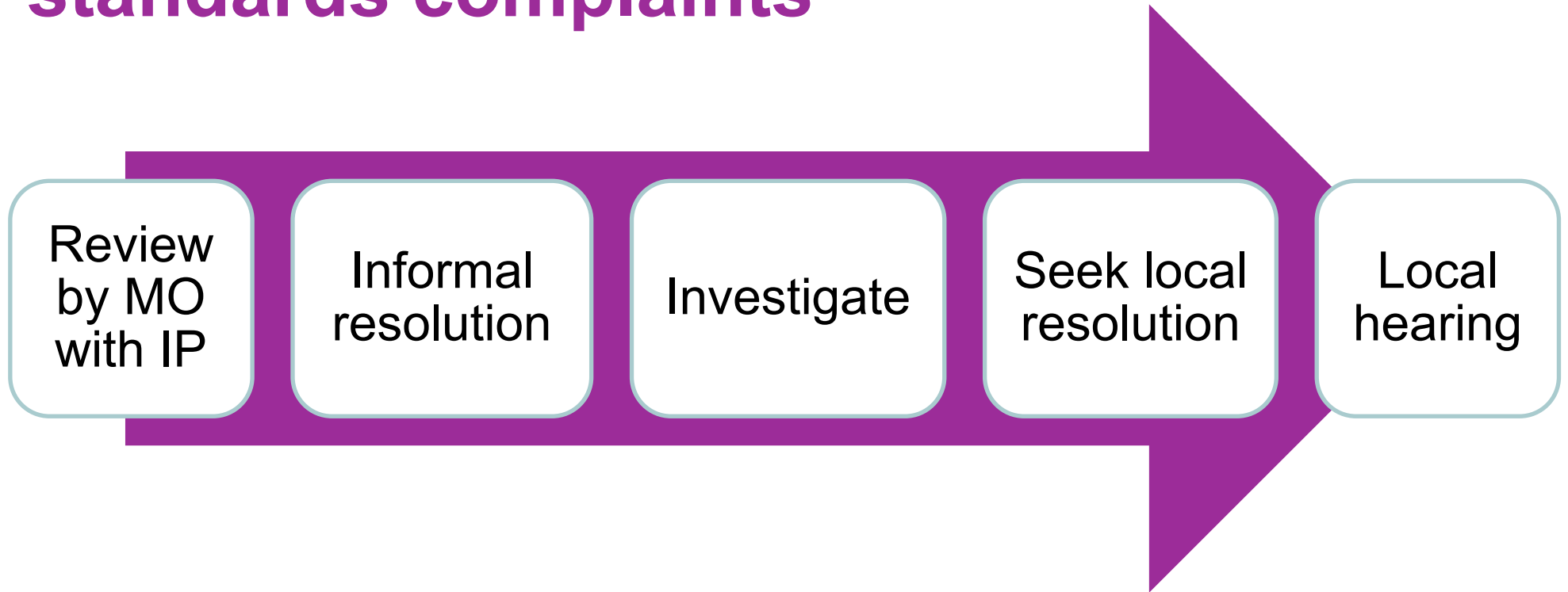


Role of the Monitoring Officer re: standards

- Maintaining the registers of interests
- Ensuring the investigation of complaints
- Supporting councillors and complainants

- Seek early advice from the Monitoring Officer on any issues re standards/interests

Usual arrangements for dealing with standards complaints



Mini scenarios



Weatherfield Council

Weatherfield Council has recently changed hands. At the first Council meeting the Mayor, Councillor Ken Barlow, loses control of the proceedings. Councillors start shouting over each other and ignoring rulings from the Mayor. They are strongly critical of the politics and policies of the opposing groups and make disparaging remarks about members and senior officers. The press describe the meeting as “shambolic”.

Councillor Sally Webster

The new Leader of the council, Councillor Sally Webster, calls the Chief Executive into her office and says that things must change. She tells him she is determined to sort out “all the deep-seated problems” she has inherited. In her Leader’s Blog, she posts that her party is going to sort out all the “dead wood” at the Council. The former Council Leader, Councillor Roy Cropper, responds robustly on social media calling Councillor Webster a “stupid woman”.

Councillor Leanne Battersby

Councillor Battersby keeps two twitter accounts – a personal one (LeaB) and one in the name of Councillor Leanne Battersby. She posts the following on her personal account:

“I was outraged at the planning committee last week. I voted against the dreadful application for the windfarm but was outvoted by idiotic opposition members who swallowed the unprofessional report written by officers who are in the pocket of the developer. These are my personal views”.

Councillor Ken Barlow

Councillor Barlow is the Mayor, and his family are major landowners in the area. He votes at the Planning Committee in support of an application for development on land which he realises, after the meeting, borders land owned by his wife. The grant of planning permission arguably adds value to her land. Councillor Barlow realises that he had completely overlooked his wife's ownership (which he was aware of) and it is not included in his register of interests. He apologises profusely.

Councillor Audrey Roberts

Councillor Audrey Roberts' husband is employed by a local firm – Weatherfield Materials Limited. Cllr Roberts notices that there is a confidential item on the agenda for a forthcoming committee meeting about awarding some contracts. One of the contracts is proposed to be granted to WML.

What if it was not her husband who works for WML, but her nephew, whom she hasn't seen for years?

Councillor Mike Baldwin

Councillor Baldwin is passionately in favour of an application which is coming to the Planning Committee. He thinks that it will bring jobs to the area and provide homes for local people. He says that his son and daughter-in-law cannot afford to buy a property in the town and this development may help them. He is also a member of 'Local Homes for Local People' a campaigning group trying to bring affordable housing into the area.

Conclusions and close

LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct Training Pack

Resource Document

(correct as at xxxx 2022)

LGA core documents	
LGA Model Code	The Model Code
LGA Guidance on Model Code	The Guidance
LGA Guidance on Model Code of Conduct – Complaints Handling	Guidance on Complaints Handling
Other LGA Material	
Social media dos and don'ts	Social media dos and don'ts
Handling abuse on social media	Handling abuse on social media
Councillors' guide to handling intimidation	Handling intimidation
Councillor workbook: councillor/officer relations	Effective councillor/officer relations

Useful case references (see Speaker's notes)	
Porter v Magill [2001] UKHL 35	The accepted definition of bias Porter v Magill
R v Commissioner for Local Government ex parte Liverpool City Council [2000] EWCA Civ 54	Predetermination and the use of whipping Liverpool City Council case
Bovis Homes v New Forest District Council [2002] EWHC 483	Bias in the role of the Chair of a planning committee Bovis v New Forest DC
R (Island Farm Development Ltd) v Bridgend County Borough Council [2006] EWHC 2189 (Admin)	Predetermination based on pre-election manifesto commitments Island Farm case
Persimmon Homes Teeside Ltd v R (Lewis) [2008] EWCA Civ 746	Bias and predetermination (including consideration of the pre-election period) Persimmon Homes case
R (Calver) v Adjudication Panel for Wales and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales [2012] EWHC 1172 (Admin)	Welsh case involving sarcastic, lampooning comments and free speech (Note that this case, and the Heesom case below, are based on the Welsh standards legislation, so are not directly applicable to England, but they review useful principles and definitions). Calver case
Dennehy R (on the application of) v London Borough of Ealing [2013] EWHC 4102 (Admin)	Standards and free speech Dennehy case

IM Properties Development Ltd v Lichfield DC [2014] EWHC 2440 (Admin)	Predetermination based on statements by a group leader to his members Lichfield DC case
Heesom v Public Services Ombudsman for Wales [2014] EWHC 1504	Free speech, respect, bullying and compromising the impartiality of officers. Heesom case
Kelton v Wiltshire Council [2015] EWHC 2853 (Admin)	Appearance of bias based on a committee member's private interests Kelton v Wiltshire
R (Harvey) v Ledbury Town Council [2018] EWHC 1151 (Admin)	Complaints against councillors have to be dealt with through the procedure in the Localism Act 2011 Harvey case
Robinson R (on the application of) v Buckinghamshire Council [2021] EWHC 2014 (Admin)	Standards and free speech Robinson v Buckinghamshire
Useful material from other jurisdictions	(But note significant differences in the codes of conduct for Wales and Scotland compared to the LGA Model Code in England)
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Guidance on the Code of Conduct May 2021	PSOW Guidance
Standards Commission for Scotland – Freedom of Expression. Advice Note on the Application of Article 10 of the ECHR and the Model Code of Conduct	Scottish Advice Note on Article 10

Committee on Standards in Public Life Report	
Committee on Standards in Public Life – Ethical Standards in Local Government	CSPL Report
Other useful links	
MHCLG Report on Interventions	Intervention report
Your council's own documents	

Standards Committee

Report title:	Publication of the Government Response to the CSPL Review of Local Government Ethical Standards
Date of meeting:	29 March 2022
Responsible Chief Officer:	Helen Edwards, Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer
Strategic impact To assist Members of the Standards Committee to consider and understand the government's position in relation to ethical standards.	

Executive summary

Recommendation: To consider the government's response to the CSPL Review of Local Government Ethical Standards.

1. Introduction

In 2019 the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) published its report "2019 Review of Local Government Ethical Standards".

This committee has considered the report in previous meetings and adopted some of its recommendations. Some recommendations required action by central government.

The government has now published its response to the report, and this is included at Appendix A.

2. Action Required

Standards Committee is asked to consider the government's response to the report and consider whether it wishes to make any recommendations based on the response.

3. Recommendation:

That members of the Standards Committee consider the government's response and determine the actions that they wish the Monitoring Officer to take, if any.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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If you need this report in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.



Department for Levelling Up,
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Dear Lord Evans,

On behalf of the Government, I would like to thank the Committee on Standards in Public Life for its report and the recommendations arising from its review of Local Government Ethical Standards, and to all those who engaged with the Committee's work. Attached is the Government response to the Committee's individual recommendations that were directed at Government.

Vibrant local democracies flourish where the reputation of the local authority is held in high regard, where councillors' decision-making is transparent, valued and trusted by the communities they serve, and where people are willing and confident to put themselves forward as potential candidates. The standards and conduct framework within which local authorities operate must drive out corruption and promote commitment to the principles on standards in public life, and tolerance to the differing views of others. In responding to the review, the Government has taken into account the importance of protecting free speech and freedom of association within the law.

The Government is committed to working with local authorities and their representative organisations to ensure that local government is supported in reinforcing its reputation for ethical local standards.

The fact that this review had been conducted in such a collaborative way with the sector has been apparent from the outset and is borne out in the final report. I am keen that Government builds on the sector-wide enthusiasm for improvement.

The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that there have been benefits from local authorities being responsible for ethical standards, including the flexibility and

discretion to resolve standards issues informally. However, we also recognise the role of Government in ensuring that the system is robust.

The number of requests for legislation in the Committee's recommendations to strengthen the standards and conduct framework and its safeguards is considerable. As indicated in this response, the Government believes that some of these suggestions do not need a legislative response but can be more appropriately, effectively, and swiftly taken forward by local authorities as best practice. The Committee will recognise that the Government and Parliament has taken a different view on these matters when it legislated for the Localism Act 2011.

I thank the Committee for their work on the review and for their patience whilst Government carefully considered their recommendations, and I personally look forward to continuing to work with you as Government progresses the commitments made in this response with the sector.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kemi Badenoch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

KEMI BADENOCH MP

**Minister of State for Equalities
and Levelling Up Communities**

Government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life review of local government ethical standards

This Government response confines itself to the Committee's recommendations directed at Government, other than with regards to the first recommendation. The response to recommendations 10, 12, 13, 14 and 16 have been grouped together and therefore appear out of numerical order below.

Recommendation 1

The Local Government Association should create an updated model code of conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government.

The Localism Act 2011 states that relevant authorities must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. It requires these authorities to adopt a code of conduct for their councillors.¹ Authorities can determine the content of their own code of conduct. However, codes must conform to the seven 'Nolan' principles of standards in public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. Relevant authorities for the purposes of these requirements include local authorities in England, namely county councils, district councils, London borough councils and parish and town councils.

It is for individual councils to set their own local code, in line with the Act. The Government has previously published a light-touch illustrative code of conduct.

The Local Government Association has worked with sector representative bodies to update its own suggested code of conduct, with the intention that this new suggested code could establish a consistent benchmark that local authorities can amend or add to as they see fit to reflect local circumstances and priorities. The Local Government Association published the updated code of conduct in January 2021. However, it remains a local decision on whether this model code is adopted.

Recommendation 2

The government should ensure that candidates standing for or accepting public offices are not required publicly to disclose their home address. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 should be amended to clarify that a councillor does not need to register their home address on an authority's register of interests.

¹ References to councillors in this document also should be deemed to include elected mayors.

This issue was brought up in the Committee's work on intimidation in public life, and the Government has already taken forward several steps in this regard. The Government is open and receptive to further steps to help prevent intimidation.

The Government agrees with the principle behind this recommendation – which safeguards elected representatives - and considers amending the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 would be an option to achieve it.

The Government will engage with interested parties on the best means to ensure that candidates and councillors are not required publicly to disclose their home address.

Notwithstanding, it is important that home addresses are internally registered with monitoring officers, to help avoid conflicts of interest.

Recommendation 3

Councillors should be presumed to be acting in an official capacity in their public conduct, including statements on publicly accessible social media. Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to permit local authorities to presume so when deciding upon code of conduct breaches.

The Government's view is that it is for individual local authorities to consider if their code of conduct is adequate in addressing the issue of inappropriate use of social media.

As the Government outlined to Parliament in March 2021 on tackling intimidation in public life: 'It is important to distinguish between strongly felt political debate on the one hand, and unacceptable acts of abuse, intimidation and violence on the other. British democracy has always been robust and oppositional. Free speech within the law can sometimes involve the expression of political views that some may find offensive': a point that the Government has recognised in a Department for Education policy paper². But a line is crossed when disagreement mutates into intimidation, which refuses to tolerate other opinions and seeks to deprive others from exercising their free speech and freedom of association.'

It is important to recognise that there is a boundary between an elected representative's public life and their private or personal life. Automatically presuming (irrespective of the context and circumstances) that any comment is in an official capacity risks conflating the two.

² Higher education: free speech and academic freedom Feb 2021
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-free-speech-and-academic-freedom>

Recommendation 4

Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to state that a local authority’s code of conduct applies to a member when they claim to act, or give the impression they are acting, in their capacity as a member or as a representative of the local authority.

The Government agrees that local authority elected representatives should act in good faith in the public interest and not seek to influence decisions for personal gain, for malicious intent or to further the interests of any business or any other organisations which they may be affiliated with.

The Local Government Association have updated their [own suggested code of conduct](#) to state that the code applies when “[a member’s] actions could give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that [they] are acting as a [member]”.

It is for individual local authorities to ensure that their codes of conducts are regularly updated, comprehensive and fit for purpose. Elected members receive the necessary training to make them aware of their personal responsibilities in upholding the code.

The Government will keep this matter under review but has no immediate plans to amend the regulations.

Recommendation 5

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 should be amended to include: unpaid directorships; trusteeships; management roles in a charity or a body of a public nature; and membership of any organisations that seek to influence opinion or public policy.

The electorate must have confidence that the decisions of their elected representatives are being made in the best interests of the community they have been elected to serve. Unpaid roles may need to be declared if it is relevant to council business, and councillors should recuse themselves if necessary if discussions relate to private bodies, they are involved in.

The Government is mindful that councillors have a right to a private life, and rights of freedom of association outside their role as a councillor. It is frequently the case that people in public life have a complex pattern of interests and play a variety of roles with different types of organisations, including community interest groups and charities.

The Government will keep this matter under review but has no immediate plans to amend the regulations.

Recommendation 6

Local authorities should be required to establish a register of gifts and hospitality, with councillors required to record gifts and hospitality received over a value of £50 or totalling £100 over a year from a single source. This requirement should be included in an updated model code of conduct.

The Local Government Association's suggested code of conduct published in January 2021 includes a requirement for members to "register... any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50". However, it did not contain any requirements relating to the total value of gifts or hospitality received from the same source over a sustained period.

Local authorities have the autonomy to set gifts and hospitality requirements in their own codes of conduct. The Government accepts that there is merit in best practice guidance on the thresholds for gifts and hospitality and agrees that a register of gifts and hospitality should be publicly available.

Recommendation 7

Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 should be repealed, and replaced with a requirement that councils include in their code of conduct that a councillor must not participate in a discussion or vote in a matter to be considered at a meeting if they have any interest, whether registered or not, "if a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard the interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your consideration or decision-making in relation to the matter".

Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 requires that a councillor must not participate in a discussion or vote on a matter where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. Section 30(3) of the Localism Act 2011 further provides that any relevant pecuniary interests of a councillor's spouse or partner are considered as a disclosable pecuniary interest of the councillor.

The Committee's report reflects concerns that the disclosable pecuniary interest arrangements infringe on the privacy of a councillor's spouse or partner. Where there would be a potential conflict of interest, the principle of integrity requires that any such interests should nevertheless be declared and resolved.

The Government will keep this matter under review but has no immediate plans to repeal Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011.

Recommendation 8

The Localism Act 2011 should be amended to require that Independent Persons are appointed for a fixed term of two years, renewable once.

The Government does not accept this recommendation as appropriate for legislation on the basis that it would be likely to be unworkable. The Government's view is that it would be more appropriately implemented as a best practice recommendation for local authorities.

In principle, it may be attractive to limit the terms Independent Persons serve to keep their role and contribution "fresh" and avoid them becoming too closely affiliated with the overriding organisational culture. However, discussions with Monitoring Officers indicate that in practice most local authorities would likely find servicing this rate of turnover unachievable. There is frequently a small pool of people capable and willing to undertake the role, who also fit the stringent specifications of being amongst the electorate, having no political affiliation, no current or previous association with the council, and no friends or family members associated with the council.

When local authorities have found effective Independent Persons who demonstrate the capability, judgement and integrity required for this quite demanding yet unpaid role, it is understandable that they may be reluctant to place limitations on the appointment.

Recommendation 9

The Local Government Transparency Code should be updated to provide that the view of the Independent Person in relation to a decision on which they are consulted should be formally recorded in any decision notice or minutes.

The Government does not agree with this. The Local Government Transparency Code is a statutory requirement to publish information; it does not regulate the content of councils' minutes or decision notices.

The substantive policy suggestion has merit but will depend on circumstances. In cases where there is no case to answer from an unfounded complaint, it should not necessarily be a legal requirement to publish details of that unfounded complaint.

Recommendation 10

A local authority should only be able to suspend a councillor where the authority's Independent Person agrees both with the finding or a breach and that suspending the councillor would be a proportionate sanction.

Recommendation 12

Local authorities should be given the discretionary power to establish a decision-making standards committee with voting independent members and voting members from dependent parishes, to decide on allegations and impose sanctions.

Recommendation 13

Councillors should be given the right to appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman if their local authority imposes a period of suspension for breaching the code of conduct.

Recommendation 14

The Local Government Ombudsman should be given the power to investigate and decide upon an allegation of a code of conduct breach by a councillor, and the appropriate sanction, an appeal by a councillor who has had a suspension imposed. The Ombudsman's decision should be binding on the local authority.

Recommendation 16

Local authorities should be given the power to suspend councillors, without allowances, for up to six months.

There is no provision in current legislation for a sanction to suspend a councillor found to have breached the code of conduct, and this was a deliberate policy decision by the Coalition Government at the time of the Localism Act 2011 to differentiate from the previous, failed Standards Board regime. The Standards Board regime allowed politically motivated and vexatious complaints and had a chilling effect on free speech within local government. These proposals would effectively reinstate that flawed regime.

It would be undesirable to have a government quango to police the free speech of councillors; it would be equally undesirable to have a council body (appointed by councillors, and/or made up of councillors) sitting in judgment on the political comments of fellow councillors.

On the rare occasions where notable breaches of the code of conduct have occurred, local authorities are not without sanctions under the current regime. Councillors can be barred from Cabinet, Committees, or representative roles, and may be publicly criticised. If the elected member is a member of a political group, they would also expect to be subject to party discipline, including being removed from that group or their party. Political parties are unlikely to reselect councillors who have brought their group or party into disrepute. All councillors are ultimately held to account via the ballot box.

As part of the Government's response to the Committee's report on intimidation in public life, the Government recommended that every political party establish their own code of conduct for party members, including elected representatives.

The Government will engage with sector representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government to seek views on options to strengthen sanctions to address breaches of the code which fall below the bar of criminal activity and related sanctions but involve serious incidents of bullying and harassment or disruptive behaviour.

Recommendation 11

Local authorities should provide legal indemnity to Independent Persons if their views or advice are disclosed. The government should require this through secondary legislation if needed.

The Government agrees in principle.

Initial soundings with the sector indicate that some local authorities already provide legal indemnity for Independent Persons.

The Government endorses providing legal indemnity for Independent Person as local authority best practice but does not currently see the need to require this through secondary legislation.

Recommendation 15

The Local Government Transparency Code should be updated to require councils to publish annually: the number of code of conduct complaints they receive; what the complaints broadly relate to (e.g., bullying; conflict of interest); the outcome of those complaints, including if they are rejected as trivial or vexatious; and any sanctions applied.

The Government believes that this is better addressed through the sector adopting as best practice a regular pattern of annual reporting by Standard Committees of the cases and complaints handled and would encourage this as best practice by the sector.

The Government does not believe that there is a requirement to prescribe to local authorities the form and content of such Standard Committee annual reports.

Recommendation 17

The government should clarify if councils may lawfully bar councillors from council premises or withdraw facilities as sanctions. These powers should be put beyond doubt in legislation if necessary.

The criminal law, overseen by the police and courts, provides for more appropriate and effective action against breaches of public order, for anti-social behaviour, and against harassment.

The occasion where councils would seek to bar councillors from council premises are thought to be extremely rare. We will consider this further.

Recommendation 18

The criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished.

It is a criminal offence to fail to declare pecuniary interests, which acts as a strong deterrent against corruption.

The Government does not agree with this recommendation, but rather believes the criminal offence of a non-disclosure of pecuniary interest to be a necessary and proportionate safeguard and deterrent against corruption.

The high bar of police involvement has served to discourage politically motivated and unfounded complaints.

Recommendation 20

Section 27(3) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to state that parish councils must adopt the code of conduct of their principal authority, with the necessary amendments, or the new model code.

The Government does not agree that this is necessary and has no plans to repeal Section 27(3) of the Localism Act 2011.

The Government considers that the adoption of the principal authority's code or the new model code is a matter for local determination.

There are merits in achieving consistency within principal authority areas to eliminate potential confusion amongst constituents and elected members but there may be instances where a parish council may want to add to the code of their principal authority to reflect local circumstances.

Recommendation 21

Section 28 (11) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to state that any sanction imposed on a parish councillor following the finding of a breach is to be determined by the relevant principal authority.

The Government has no current plans to repeal Section 28 (11) of the Localism Act 2011 but will give this matter further consideration.

Recommendation 22

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 should be amended to provide that disciplinary protections for statutory officers extend to all disciplinary action, not just dismissal.

The three statutory officers in local government are the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and the Chief Finance Officer (often referred to as the Section 151 Officer).

Under the current disciplinary arrangements for statutory officers, any decision to dismiss a statutory officer must be taken by full council, following a hearing by a panel that must include at least two Independent Persons. The Committee consider that the disciplinary protections for statutory officers should be enhanced, by extending disciplinary protections to all disciplinary actions (such as suspension or formal warnings), not just dismissal.

The Government agrees in principle with this recommendation and recognises this will be pertinent to Monitoring Officers who may not necessarily be afforded the same seniority in the organisational hierarchy of a local authority as the two other statutory officers (Head of Paid Service and the Section 151 Officer), and who may be subject to personal pressures when conducting high profile breach of conduct investigations.

The Government will engage with sector representative bodies of all tiers of local government to seek views on amending the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England)(Amendment) Regulations to provide disciplinary protections for statutory officers.

Recommendation 23

The Local Government Transparency Code should be updated to provide that local authorities must ensure that their whistleblowing policy specifies a named contact for the external auditor alongside their contact details, which should be available on the authority's website.

The Government agrees with the principle that openness is essential.

Most local authorities already publish their whistleblowing policy, procedures and a named contact on their websites, and Government is recommending that this is adopted as a best practice recommendation.

The Government published the UK National Action Plan for Open Government 2021 – 2023 in January 2022. This includes a commitment on local transparency.³ The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will work with the local government community to develop a set of specific actions to advance transparency in the sector. DLUHC will support local government to solidify their transparency policies and processes and encourage proactive publication of open data across councils.

Recommendation 24

Councillors should be listed as ‘prescribed persons’ for the purposes of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Prescribed persons are individuals or organisations that a worker may approach outside their workplace to report suspected or known wrongdoing and still be protected by the rights afforded to them under whistleblowing legislation. They are prescribed by an order made by the Secretary of State (for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) for this purpose. A complete list of prescribed persons is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2>.

Local councillors would not meet the criteria of being external to an individual’s workplace in relation to matters affecting the council and could therefore not be considered as a ‘prescribed person’ for the purposes of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Disclosures relating to local authorities can be made to the external auditor of the relevant authority, the Comptroller and Auditor General (National Audit Office), or a Member of Parliament.

However, the Government recognises that this may provide a further check and balance against council corruption or wrongdoing and is open to further representations on the matter on how local accountability can be strengthened in this regard.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-for-open-government-2021-2023/uk-national-action-plan-for-open-government-2021-2023#local-transparency>