



**Committee:** STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
**Date:** FRIDAY, 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 2007  
**Venue:** LANCASTER TOWN HALL  
**Time:** 10.00 A.M.

**A G E N D A**

1. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 2)  
Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2006.
2. **Consultation on Amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members** (Pages 3 - 44)  
Report of the Head of Legal and Human Resources/Monitoring Officer.
3. **Member Induction and Training** (Pages 45 - 48)  
Report of the Head of Legal and Human Resources/Monitoring Officer.
4. **Procedure for considering reports on investigations of alleged breaches of Council Protocols** (Pages 49 - 52)  
Report of the Head of Legal and Human Resources/Monitoring Officer.
5. **Update on Workload of Standards Board and local cases** (Pages 53 - 54)  
Report of the Head of Legal and Human Resources/Monitoring Officer.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

**(i) Membership**

Councillors

Councillors Keith Budden, Gina Dowding, John Harrison, David Kerr, Janie Kirkman, Roger Mace and Roger Sherlock

Voting Co-optees

Stephen Lamley (Chairman)  
Tony James, Fiona Humphreys (LAPTC) and Sue McIntyre

**(ii) Substitute Membership**

**Councillors**

Councillors Susie Charles, Jean Dent, Paul Gardner and Pat Quinton

**(iii) Queries regarding this Agenda**

Please contact James Doble, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582057 or email [jdoble@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:jdoble@lancaster.gov.uk).

**(iv) Changes to Membership, substitutions or apologies**

Please contact Members' Secretary, telephone 582170, or alternatively email [memberservices@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:memberservices@lancaster.gov.uk).

MARK CULLINAN,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,  
TOWN HALL,  
DALTON SQUARE,  
LANCASTER LA1 1PJ

Published on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2007.

**STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE**

1.00 P.M.

13TH SEPTEMBER 2006

**PRESENT:-**Councillors

Councillors Keith Budden, David Kerr, Janie Kirkman and Roger Mace

Independent Members

Stephen Lamley (Chairman), Fiona Humphreys (LAPTC), Tony James and Sue McIntyre

Apologies for Absence

Councillors Gina Dowding and John Harrison

Officers in attendance:-Gillian Noall  
Sarah Taylor  
James DobleHead of Democratic Services  
Head of Legal and Human Resources  
Principal Democratic Support Officer**1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN*****Resolved:***

That Councillor Roger Mace be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year 2006/07.

**2 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2006 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**3 EXEMPT ITEM*****Resolved:-***

That in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 7c of Schedule 12A of that Act.

**4 CONSIDERATION OF THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S REPORT IN RESPECT OF TWO MATTERS REFERRED FOR LOCAL INVESTIGATION**

The Committee considered the evidence provided in both the reports by the former Monitoring Officer.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That in respect of cases SBE 12321.05 and SBE 11628.05 the former Monitoring Officer's findings of no failure be accepted.
- (2) That a report be requested from the Monitoring Officer on options for providing further training for Parish Councils.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 1.37 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
James Doble, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582057 or email  
jdoble@lancaster.gov.uk**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE****CONSULTATION ON AMENDMENTS TO THE MODEL CODE  
OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS  
23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007****Report of Head of Legal and Human Resources/Monitoring  
Officer****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To enable the Committee to consider its response to the government's Consultation Paper on the Code of Conduct.

**This report is public**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) **The Committee is requested to indicate whether it wishes to respond to the Consultation Paper on amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members, and, if so, to indicate its response and authorise the Head of Legal and Human Resources to submit the response on its behalf.**

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Members may recall that at its meeting in June 2005, the Committee considered a Standards Board Consultation on a review of the Code of Conduct. Following that consultation, the Standards Board made recommendations to the government, and the government's response was set out in a Discussion Paper "Conduct in English Local Government: The Future" issued in December 2005. Since then, a revised Code of Conduct has been awaited, and on the 22nd January 2007, the government issued a draft revised Code of Conduct with a further Consultation Paper. The government is seeking responses by the 9th March 2007.

**2.0 Proposal Details**

- 2.1 The Consultation Paper, together with the draft revised Code of Conduct is appended to this report (Appendix 1). Members will note that it is now intended for there to be one Code of Conduct for all local authorities, rather than different Models for different kinds of authority, as at present. Once the new Code of Conduct is finalised, it would be the intention of the Monitoring Officer to provide the parish councils with a template to ensure that those provisions that are not relevant to parishes are deleted.

- 2.2 One of the reasons for the delay in publishing the revised Code of Conduct was the decision of the High Court in October 2006 in a case involving the Mayor of London, which cast doubt on the lawfulness of the Code applying to the conduct of Members in their private capacity. The government intends to use the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, which is likely to be enacted in October 2007, to extend the application of the Code to conduct in Members' private lives. The revised Code appears to have been drafted to avoid the need for further revision when that amendment is enacted.
- 2.3 The draft revised Code provides a number of relaxations from the current Code. For example:
- it removes the obligation to report allegations of failure to comply with the Code
  - it allows for the disclosure of confidential information where it is in the public interest to do so
  - it limits the obligation to disclose a personal interest of a family member, friend or person having close personal association, to those that the Member is aware of or ought reasonably to be aware of
  - it creates a new category of public service interest as to membership of another relevant authority, public authority or body to which the Member is appointed by the Council
  - it provides for a Member otherwise having a prejudicial interest, to attend a meeting for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the meeting agrees and subject to the Member withdrawing after so doing and before the decision making process
- 2.4 The draft revised Code imposes additional obligations on Members, such as:
- not to bully any person
  - not to intimidate a person involved in proceedings under the Code
  - to have regard to the Local Authority Code of Publicity
- 2.5 The Consultation Paper sets out eight specific questions on which views are sought, as follows:
1. *Does the proposed text on the disclosure of confidential information strike an appropriate balance between the need to treat certain information as confidential, but to allow some information to be made public in defined circumstances when to do so would be in the public interest?*
  2. *Subject to powers being available to refer in the code to actions by members in their private capacity beyond actions which are directly relevant to the office of the member, is the proposed text which limits the proscription of activities in members' private capacity to those activities which have already been found to be unlawful by the courts, appropriate?*
  3. *Is the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity serving a useful purpose? If the Publicity Code is abolished, do consultees think some or all of its provisions should be promulgated in a different way, eg via guidance issued by local government representative bodies, or should authorities be left to make their own decisions in this area without any central guidance? Should authorities not currently subject to the Publicity Code be required to follow it, or should the current position with regard to them be maintained? For Members'*

information a copy of the Code of Practice is appended to this report (Appendix 2).

4. *Does the proposed text with regard to gifts and hospitality adequately combine the need for transparency as well as proportionality in making public information with regard to personal interests?*
5. *Does the proposed text relating to friends, family and those with a close personal association adequately cover the breadth of relationships which ought to be covered, to identify the most likely people who might benefit from decisions made by a member, including family, friends, business associates and personal acquaintances?*
6. *Would it be appropriate for new exceptions to be included in the text as additions to the list of items which are not to be regarded as prejudicial?*
7. *Is the proposed text, relaxing the rules to allow increased representation at meetings, including where members attend to make representations, answer questions or give evidence, appropriate?*
8. *Is there a better, more user-friendly way of ensuring the text is gender neutral, for example, would consultees consider that amending the wording to say “you” instead of “he or she” or “him or her” would result in a clearer and more accessible code for members?*

2.6 The Consultation Paper indicates that, apart from these specific questions, the government welcomes any comments and suggestions on the issues covered.

2.7 The Monitoring Officer would comment on the draft revised Code as follows:

Paragraph 3(iii) – It is not clear whether the word “and” or the word “or “ should appear between subparagraphs (aa) and (bb). (Question 1 of the Consultation Paper refers).

Paragraph 4(2) – The wording does not appear to limit the conduct to that which is a criminal offence, although the Consultation Paper suggests that this is what is intended. (Question 2 of the Consultation Paper refers).

Paragraph 8(2) – If a Member with a public service interest does not speak, there is no requirement to declare the interest. A member of the public might find it confusing for one Member to declare an interest and another not (because the Member did not speak), when both take part in the decision by voting.

Paragraph 9(2) – The wording “A member does not have a prejudicial interest....” is to be welcomed, as the equivalent wording in paragraph 10(2) of the current Code, “A member may regard himself as not having a prejudicial interest....” has been the source of much doubt and confusion.

Interests – It would perhaps have been clearer to have all the references to “public service interests” in a separate paragraph. Having different definitions for public service interest in paragraphs 8(7)(a) and 9(4) is confusing.

Definitions – “close personal association” and “family” are not defined, and this may lead to difficulties in interpretation.

Bias – It might be helpful if there was a reference in the revised Code under the heading of “prejudicial interests”, to the fact that a Member should not participate in decision-making, notwithstanding that a prejudicial interest does not arise, if such participation is likely to lead to a perception of bias. The Code is sometimes read in isolation, and it is important that Members are aware that the Code does not exclude the application of common law rules. A specific reference to bias might emphasise this.

2.7 As indicated above, responses to the consultation are requested by the 9th March 2006. It is not clear when the final version of the Code of Conduct will be published, but it seems likely that this will not be in time for it to be adopted by the Council before the May elections. This is unfortunate, as it means that after the elections, members will be required to sign up to the current Code, even though it will shortly be superseded, and training will need to be provided on both the current and the revised versions. This will apply to parish councils, as well as the City Council. Members who wish to comment on this in their response.

**3.0 Details of Consultation**

3.1 This is the Committee’s opportunity to respond to the government consultation.

**4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)**

4.1 The Committee should decide whether or not it wishes to respond to the consultation, and, if so what its response should be.

**5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 The Committee is asked to consider the Consultation Paper and the draft revised Code of Conduct.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER’S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comments.

**MONITORING OFFICER’S COMMENTS**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

**Contact Officer:** Mrs. S. Taylor  
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**E-mail:** STaylor@lancaster.gov.uk





*Consultation on Amendments  
to the Model Code of Conduct  
for Local Authority Members*

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*Consultation on Amendments  
to the Model Code of Conduct  
for Local Authority Members*

On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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# Introduction

The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, issued in October 2006, set out the Government's proposals to put in place a clearer, simpler and more proportionate model code of conduct, which would include changes to the rules on personal and prejudicial interests.

This announcement followed the Discussion Paper *Conduct in English Local Government: The Future*, issued by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in December 2005, which set out the Government's response to the recommendations made by the Standards Board for England for amendments to the model code of conduct for local authority members. These recommendations followed extensive consultation by the Board in 2005 on amending the code, which attracted over 1,200 responses. We are grateful to the Board for the effort it put into its review and the detailed recommendations it formulated which have served as the basis of the current consultation.

Our Discussion Paper indicated that we welcomed the recommendations the Board presented. We agreed with the Board that amendments should be made to the code along the lines it proposed, including making the code clearer and more proportionate, but maintaining a rigorous approach to the identification of serious misconduct.

The decision to amend the code so as to make it more effective and proportionate formed part of the Government's wider review of the conduct regime applying to local authorities, which concluded that the regime should be amended along the lines suggested by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, ie that there should be a move to a more locally-based decision-making regime for the investigation and determination of all but the most serious of misconduct allegations, but with the Standards Board at the centre of the revised regime with a new strategic, regulatory role to ensure consistency of standards.

In advance of this current consultation, we consulted a number of key stakeholders informally on the detail of the proposals, as part of the Department's White Paper implementation plan. Our intention has been to inaugurate a new, more transparent and collaborative way of working with local government and other stakeholders. We are very grateful for the comments received from the LGA, ACSeS, SOLACE and ALACE, among others, which have assisted us in the shaping of these proposals.

This paper represents the Government's consultation on the detailed amendments needed to put our undertaking to amend the code of conduct into effect. There are four current model codes of conduct applying to various categories of local authority members. These were issued in 2001 and are as follows:

- The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct)(England) Order 2001
- The Parish Councils (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001

- The National Park and Broads Authorities (Model Code of Conduct)(England) Order 2001
- The Police Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001.

We propose to combine the current four individual codes referred to above into one consolidated code. A revised draft model code to put this into effect is enclosed at Annex A to this consultation paper. In consequence of providing a consolidated code, we have disappplied certain provisions in respect of particular types of authorities. The consultation paper provides an explanatory commentary on the proposed amendments set out in the revised draft code, and invites the views of consultees on the detailed proposals. We would welcome comments on the proposed model code, including in relation to the questions we have specifically identified in the paper. These are also listed separately at Annex B.

Please send any comments you may have on the paper to

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 5/G10  
 Eland House  
 Bressenden Place  
 London  
 SW1E 5DU

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by 9 March 2007

Your responses may be made public by the Department for Communities and Local Government. If you do not want all or part of your response or name made public, please state this clearly in the response. Any confidentiality disclaimer that may be generated by your organisation's IT system or included as a general statement in your FAX cover sheet will be taken to apply only to information in your response for which confidentiality has been specifically requested.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want other information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

If you have comments or complaints about the way this consultation has been conducted, these should be sent to:

Albert Joyce, Communities and Local Government Consultation Co-ordinator,  
Zone 6/H10, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU; or by e-mail to:  
albert.joyce@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

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# Commentary on Detailed Amendments Proposed

(THE BRACKETED REFERENCES TO PARAGRAPH NUMBERS CORRESPOND TO THE RELEVANT PARAGRAPHS OF THE DRAFT MODEL CODE)

## Unlawful discrimination

### **1. To delete reference to unlawful discrimination (paragraph 2(2)(a))**

Paragraph 2(a) of the model code currently provides that a member must promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person. However, an Adjudication Panel finding in January 2005 concluded that the Panel has no jurisdiction to make findings of unlawful discrimination. We need therefore to ensure that unlawful discrimination is not an issue on which a Panel may be required to make a determination, so the provisions in current paragraph 2(a) will be deleted.

We propose to replace paragraph 2(a) with a provision proscribing members from doing anything that would seriously prejudice their authority's statutory duties in regard to equality. We are also retaining the provision in the current rules requiring members to treat others with respect. These provisions should allow the code to continue to support the principles of fair treatment and respect for others, including behaviour and actions which could relate to equality issues.

## Bullying

### **2. Add a provision specifically proscribing bullying (paragraph 2(2)(b))**

Currently, paragraph 2(b) of the model code states that a member must treat others with respect. Paragraph 4 of the current code provides that a member must not bring his or her office or authority into disrepute. The code makes no specific reference, however, to bullying behaviour.

We propose to add a specific provision to indicate that members must not bully any person, ie that bullying of other members, officers or anyone else is a breach of the code of conduct. We wish to ensure that it is clear that bullying behaviour should play no part in members' conduct.

We have accepted the Standards Board's view that a specific definition of bullying does not need to be included in the code, and that this should be left to guidance by the Board, which will indicate, for example, the view we take that bullying can relate not only to patterns of behaviour, but also to individual incidents.



## Disclosure of confidential information

### **3. To allow members to disclose confidential information where such disclosure is in the public interest (paragraph 3(a)(iii))**

Paragraph 3(a) of the code currently provides that a member should not disclose information given to him or her in confidence or which the member believes to be of a confidential nature. There is no explicit provision allowing members to disclose information if this is in the public interest.

An Adjudication Panel decision in 2005 confirmed, as a matter of law, that paragraph 3(a) of the code of conduct fails properly to take into account Article 10(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Panel found that in order to be compatible with Article 10(1), the code should be read so as to allow for the disclosure of information of a confidential nature where it is in the public interest to do so.

We therefore wish to provide that a member may make a disclosure of information given to him or her in confidence or which he or she believes to be of a confidential nature in the public interest provided the disclosure is in good faith and reasonable, and that the member has not breached any reasonable requirements of the authority, eg in the form of relevant local protocols or procedures. We propose that the Standards Board would issue guidance on how they would expect members to interpret this. We expect that such guidance would indicate that members should be able to disclose information in the following circumstances: where they reasonably believe that the disclosure will indicate evidence of a criminal offence, where the authority is failing to comply with its legal obligations, that a miscarriage of justice has occurred or may occur, that the health and safety of anyone has been endangered, or that the environment has been damaged.

We appreciate that it is important that the public interest test does not allow members to use the defence of public interest when merely seeking to make political capital through disclosure of properly confidential information. Our aim is to strike a sensible balance which is workable in practice between the need to treat certain information confidentially and to allow the disclosure of information in appropriate circumstances.

There may be scope for the provision on confidential information to be clarified further, so as to make clear that the rules on the disclosure of information cover information received by a member in his official capacity or which relates to the work of the council. This would ensure that a member would not be able to claim that although he did disclose information, he did not receive the information in his capacity as a member, which the current drafting might potentially allow him to claim.

*Q1. Does the proposed text on the disclosure of confidential information strike an appropriate balance between the need to treat certain information as confidential, but to allow some information to be made public in defined circumstances when to do so would be in the public interest?*

## Behaviour outside official duties

### 4. Paragraphs 4 and 5

Paragraph 4 of the current code provides that a member must not in his or her official capacity or any other circumstance conduct himself or herself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his or her office or authority into disrepute. In addition, paragraph 5 currently provides that a member must not in his or her official capacity or any other circumstance use his or her position as a member improperly to secure for himself or herself or any other person an advantage or disadvantage.

The Standards Board has recommended amending the code so that, in terms of a member's behaviour in private life, conduct which amounts to a criminal offence, as well as behaviour which would be regarded as criminal but for which a conviction has not been secured, could be regarded as bringing the member's office or authority into disrepute under the terms of the code.

Separately the decision by the High Court in the case of the appeal of the Mayor of London, in October 2006, cast some doubt on the ability of the code of conduct to proscribe behaviour of members in their private capacity. The judgement commented on the interpretation of section 52 of the Local Government Act 2000. This section imposes a duty on a council member to give an undertaking to observe the code of conduct 'in performing his functions'. The Court considered that section 52 limits the scope of the code so that conduct in a member's private capacity can only come within the scope of the code where it is established that there is a direct link with the member's office, eg if the member uses his office for personal gain.

The Court judgement gave examples of cases where it did not think that the code was able to apply. These included where a member shoplifts or is guilty of drunken driving. Such action will not now be caught by the code if the offending conduct had nothing specifically to do with the member's position as a councillor.

This is a narrower interpretation than we have previously applied to the code. Up to now we have assumed it was possible to take a wider view of what private conduct could be relevant, ie including actions not necessarily to do with the member's position as a councillor but which may affect the member's reputation and electors' confidence in him or her.

In response to this case, we have decided to amend sections 49 to 52 of the Local Government Act 2000 so that behaviour in a private capacity might be included within the remit of a code of conduct. This amendment is included in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill currently before Parliament.

If the amendments are enacted, Ministers are currently minded to provide that only private behaviour for which the member has been convicted by a court should be proscribed by the code of conduct, as referred to in paragraph 4(2), and not behaviour falling short of a criminal offence.

*Q2. Subject to powers being available to us to refer in the code to actions by members in their private capacity beyond actions which are directly relevant to the office of the member, is the proposed text which limits the proscription of activities in members' private capacity to those activities which have already been found to be unlawful by the courts, appropriate?*

## Commission of criminal offence before taking office

### **5. Paragraph 4(2)**

We agree with the Standards Board that in the circumstances where a member's behaviour has been found to be unlawful by a court, then the member may be perceived to have brought his or her office or authority into disrepute. We also consider that where a member committed the offence before taking office as a member but where he or she was not convicted until after becoming a member, then this offence should be capable of being taken into account when considering whether the member has brought his or her authority into disrepute. A new paragraph 4(2) implements this amendment.

## Using or seeking to use improper influence

### **6. To amend paragraph 5(a) by adding 'or attempt to use'**

Paragraph 5(a) currently provides that a member must not in his or her official capacity or any other circumstance use his or her position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for himself or herself or any other person an advantage or disadvantage. A literal interpretation of this provision might mean that it does not cover unsuccessful attempts by the member to use his or her position in this way. We believe that justice would be better served if provision was made for the code to proscribe members' attempts to use their position even where such attempts were not in the event successful. To this end, we have proposed that the paragraph should provide that the member should not either use or attempt to use his or her position to confer an advantage or disadvantage for himself or herself or anyone else.

### **7. Paragraph 5(b)(ii)**

We have sought to simplify this sub-paragraph without losing any of the intended meaning of the original provision, and specific reference is added to clarify the intention that an authority's resources should not be used improperly for party political purposes.

## Publicity code

### **8. To add reference at paragraph 5 to the need for the member to have regard to the guidance set out in the Government's local authority publicity code**

We believe it would be a sensible complement to the code to make it clear that, in addition to providing in paragraph 5 that members should not use resources improperly for political purposes, they should also have regard to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (a copy of which can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1133867>) is issued by the Government under the Local Government Act 1986 and was last amended in 2001. The Publicity Code provides instructions about the content, style and distribution of promotional activity and material produced by authorities, supplementing the basic requirement in the 1986 Act that authorities must not use their resources for political purposes.

It has been suggested by some that the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity is unnecessary and restrictive. We would be grateful to hear the views of consultees on the Publicity Code and whether or not they feel it is serving a useful purpose. If people feel it should be abolished, do they think it should be replaced by any other guidance, eg issued by local authority representative bodies?

The Publicity Code does not currently apply to the Greater London Authority, fire and rescue authorities and the national parks authorities, although the code of conduct does apply to these bodies. We would also be grateful therefore for views on whether and how it might be appropriate for the Publicity Code to apply in relation to the above bodies.

*Q3. Is the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity serving a useful purpose? If the Publicity Code is abolished, do consultees think some or all of its provisions should be promulgated in a different way, eg via guidance issued by local government representative bodies, or should authorities be left to make their own decisions in this area without any central guidance? Should authorities not currently subject to the Publicity Code be required to follow it, or should the current position with regard to them be maintained?*

## Reporting breaches of the code and proscribing intimidation

### **9. To delete the duty in paragraph 7 of the existing code to report breaches of the code by other members, and add a proscription (at paragraph 2(2)(c)) on the intimidation of complainants and witnesses**

Paragraph 7 of the current code provides that a member must, if he or she becomes aware of another member's breach of the code, make an allegation to the Standards Board of that breach.

We wish to delete the requirement to report other members' breaches of the code, which has been perceived by some as encouraging councillors to make trivial allegations.

At the same time, to protect members who do report serious misconduct from victimisation, we propose to add a provision at paragraph 2(2)(c) prohibiting a member from intimidating or attempting to intimidate a complainant or witness, people carrying out the investigation, support staff and others involved in the case, whether or not they are members, officers or members of the public. This would demonstrate to members that victimising complainants or witnesses will rebound on them by making the case against them more serious, since such intimidation would itself count as a breach of the code.

In addition, since it is the Government's policy to increase the proportion of cases to be investigated locally, it is important that officers who are required to handle such cases are free from inappropriate pressures from members.

## Gifts and hospitality

### **10. Paragraphs 7(a)(vi) and 8(3)**

Paragraph 17 of the code currently provides that in the case of the receipt of any gift or hospitality over the value of £25, members must notify the monitoring officer of the existence and nature of the gift or hospitality. There is no provision for such information to be made public in the register of members' interests.

We wish to reinforce the principles of accountability and openness of the conduct regime by requiring that information about gifts and hospitality should be included in the register of interests. We propose therefore to provide that the receipt of gifts or hospitality of over £25 in value should be an interest that should be registered as a personal interest. However, to ensure this provision is proportionate, we also propose that the requirement to disclose the personal interest to a meeting would cease after five years following the receipt of the gift or hospitality, although that receipt would remain on the register as a personal interest.

*Q4. Does the proposed text with regard to gifts and hospitality adequately combine the need for transparency as well as proportionality in making public information with regard to personal interests?*

## Body influencing public opinion or policy

### **11. Paragraph 7(b)(iv)**

To clarify the fact that the existing reference to a body whose purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy in which the member may have a personal interest, includes any political party.

## Interests of family, friends and those with a close personal association

### **12. To amend reference in the current code to friends and family by adding reference to any person with whom the member has a close personal association (paragraph 7(c)(i) and elsewhere)**

Paragraph 8 of the current code provides that a member must regard himself or herself as having a personal interest in a matter if a decision on it affects to a greater extent than other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the authority's area, the well-being or financial position of himself, a relative or a friend. We wish to ensure that the definition of personal interest includes matters affecting a range of personal, business and professional associates, as well as people who would specifically be termed as 'friends'. Reference has therefore been added to any person with whom the member has a close personal association.

### **13. Definition of family and friends (paragraph 7(c)(i) and elsewhere)**

With the inclusion of "close personal association" it is not thought necessary to keep the definitions of 'family' or 'friend' in the code. Guidance by the Standards Board will give assistance to members on these definitions.

*Q5. Does the proposed text relating to friends, family and those with a close personal association adequately cover the breadth of relationships which ought to be covered, to identify the most likely people who might benefit from decisions made by a member, including family, friends, business associates and personal acquaintances?*

## Definition of personal interests

### **14. To replace reference in paragraph 8 to the inhabitants of an authority's area with provision that members should not be required to register an interest in a matter unless the interest is greater than that of the majority of the inhabitants of the ward affected by the matter. For parish councils the definition would apply in respect of the council's whole area (paragraph 7(c)).**

Paragraph 8 of the current code provides that members have a personal interest if they would be affected by a matter to a greater extent than other council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the authority's area.

We wish the code to allow members to be able more frequently to take part in council meetings which their communities expect them to participate in or on issues, in some cases, which they have even been elected specifically to address. We therefore wish to delete the current requirement that a personal interest arises where a decision on it might be regarded as affecting the member to a greater extent than other inhabitants of the authority's area, and replace it with a requirement that the personal interest arises only where the interest might reasonably be regarded as affecting the member to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward which is affected by the particular matter. The purpose is to reduce the

number of times a personal interest may arise on matters which are not of genuine concern to the public, as a result of the broad current test relating to the whole council's area, which in effect has meant in some cases that members have felt they have to declare interests which are in fact shared with a large number of people.

Narrowing the definition will provide a more locally-based focus, and reduce the number of personal interests which arise by requiring that an interest would arise only where the interest would be higher than most people in the local area affected by the matter. This should mean that an interest would not arise where interests are shared by a substantial number of inhabitants in the authority's area.

Where members, eg elected mayors and co-opted members, do not represent wards, the relevant test would be whether the issue affected the member more than the majority of people in the ward affected by the particular matter.

In the case of parish councils, which do not usually have wards, their areas are so small that we propose to apply the definition in respect of the council's whole area.

## Disclosure of personal interests

### 15. Paragraph 8(4)

Under the current code, a member would technically be in breach of the code's provisions in respect of the personal interests of a relative even if he or she was unaware of any interest held by a relative. It would be sensible and more proportionate to amend the provision so that the rules on the disclosure of interests at a meeting in respect of a family member, friend or a person with a close personal association will only apply if the member is aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the interest held by that person.

## Public service interests

### **16. To create a new category of 'public service interest', which arises where a member is also a member of another public body, and for the public service interest only to be declared at meetings where the member speaks on the relevant issue (paragraph 8(2) and 8(7))**

Paragraph 9 of the current code provides that a member with a personal interest must disclose the interest at the commencement of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent.

We wish to provide a definition of what is meant by 'public service interest', ie an interest which arises where a member is also a member of another public body, to which they have been appointed or nominated by the authority, or of which they are a member in their own right. Members would be required, as now, to enter any such interest they have in the register of interests.

However, instead of, as now, requiring that public service interests are declared at the start of any relevant business, we wish to require that such interests should only be declared at such time as the member speaks on a relevant issue. The aim of this is to avoid the current onerous requirement by which lengthy periods at the start of business on a particular issue can be spent by members in declaring their personal interests in the particular issue, even if many or all of those members have no intention to take part in the debate on that subject.

## Prejudicial interests – List of exemptions

### **17. To simplify and amend the list of exemptions where members should not regard themselves as having a prejudicial interest (paragraph 9(2)(b))**

Three new items have been added to the list of interests which are not to be regarded as prejudicial. This will mean that a member will not have a prejudicial interest where the matter relates to the authority’s functions in respect of:

- Indemnities. This addition arises from the Standards Board’s experience of cases where, for example, members have felt unable to vote in discussions on the issue by the authority of indemnities which might relate to themselves, as well as a number of other members of the council.
- The setting of council tax. We understand that some members have been concerned that in discussing this issue, prejudicial interests may arise for them because of their connection with an organisation funded from an operational budget which is being set by the council tax settlement. We consider that such an interest is likely to be too remote to be a prejudicial interest.
- Considering whether or not the member should become a freeman of the authority.

We also propose to amend the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations to allow a member to attend a hearing of a standards committee into his or her conduct in order to be able to defend himself or herself.

*Q6. Would it be appropriate for new exceptions to be included in the text as additions to the list of items which are not to be regarded as prejudicial?*

## Overview and scrutiny committees

### **18. To provide that members are excluded from overview and scrutiny committees where they are scrutinising decisions, including decisions made by the authority’s executive, which they were involved in making (paragraph 10)**

Paragraph 11 of the current code does not allow a member to scrutinise a decision of a committee, sub-committee or joint committee ‘of which he may also be a member’. It does not cover the position of a member who may not now be a member of the relevant committee but was a member at the time the decision was taken. We therefore wish to make an amendment to ensure that the proscription will apply where the councillor was a member at the time of the decision or action.



A further consequence of the current paragraph 11 provision is that a member is not allowed to scrutinise decisions where he or she is a member of the committee whose decision is being scrutinised, ie the proscription applies where he or she was not involved in making the decision, for example, because he or she was absent from the committee or where he or she became a member after the decision was taken. This can have the effect of debarring members from the scrutiny function in respect of decisions in which they had no involvement. We therefore propose an amendment to provide that members should only be debarred from involvement in the scrutiny function in cases where they are scrutinising decisions they were involved in making.

In addition, the rules do not currently refer to decisions made or action taken by the authority's executive. They therefore do not cover the case where a former member of the executive sits on a scrutiny committee to scrutinise decisions of the executive to which he or she contributed. We propose therefore that paragraph 10 is amended to indicate that the restriction will apply to former executive members who were involved in making the relevant decisions.

## Participation in relation to prejudicial interests

### **19. To provide a clearer prejudicial interest test to apply for public service interests and where members attend to make representations (paragraphs 9 and 11)**

Actions which a member should take where he or she has a prejudicial interest are set out in current paragraph 12.

We wish to provide for clearer and more proportionate rules to apply in respect of participation in council meetings for those who have public sector interests, ie who are members of another authority or a charity or lobbying body, and for those who are attending meetings to make representations.

We consider that the fact that an issue considered by one body may affect another body with which the member is involved does not necessarily mean that the member's judgement of the public interest will be prejudiced. In such cases, the public service interest should only be considered prejudicial where

- (a) the matter relates to the financial affairs of the body concerned, or
- (b) where the matter relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence or permission (eg in respect of planning and licensing) in relation to the body.

Where a member has a public service interest and (a) or (b) do not apply, then no prejudicial interest would arise and the member may speak and vote at the meeting.

Any member (including a member with a public service interest to which (a) or (b) also apply), will not have a prejudicial interest where they attend a meeting to make representations, answer questions or give evidence, provided the committee agrees that the member may do so. After members have answered such questions or given such evidence, they must then withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held.

All members with a prejudicial interest, regardless of the category of interest, would still continue to be subject to paragraph 11(1)(c), ie the requirement that members should not seek improperly to influence a decision about the matter.

*Q7. Is the proposed text, relaxing the rules to allow increased representation at meetings, including where members attend to make representations, answer questions or give evidence, appropriate?*

## Sensitive Information

### **20. To provide for sensitive information in respect of private interests not to be included on the register of interests where revealing it is likely to lead to the member or those he or she lives with being subject to violence or intimidation (paragraphs 8(5) and 13)**

Paragraph 14 of the current code requires members to register all of their personal interests.

We wish to ensure that sensitive information, for example, where members are employed in areas of sensitive employment, such as certain types of scientific research, need not be made public if to do so would threaten the safety of the member and/or his family. A member who considers that the information which he or she would need to register is sensitive, will apply to the authority's monitoring officer for the interest not to be registered. If the monitoring officer is satisfied that the information is sensitive and the risk of intimidation of the member or those he or she lives with is real, the member may not include the sensitive information on the register of interests.

Consistent with the above, we also wish to amend paragraph 8(5), so that a member with an accepted sensitive interest should not have to disclose publicly the details of that sensitive information at a council meeting, although he or she will still need to disclose that they have a personal interest if this is the case in respect of a particular matter under discussion.

## National Park and Boards Authorities – prejudicial interest

### **21. Delete sub-paragraphs (f) and (g) from paragraph 10(2) of the current National Park and Broads Authorities (Model Code of Conduct)(England) Order 2001**

Paragraph 10(2)(f) and (g) of the current model code applying to the National Park and Broads Authorities makes provision in respect of matters for which a member may regard himself as not having a prejudicial interest. At the request of DEFRA, and following earlier consultation by them with the National Parks and Broads Authorities, we wish to delete provisions allowing interest in respect of matters relating to farming, land, certain charges or navigation not to be regarded as prejudicial interests for members in certain cases. This is to address criticism that these clauses have led to preferential treatment for some landowners and navigators, who, if it was not for the operation of the paragraph, would have been regarded as having a prejudicial interest.

## Register of members' interests

### **22. Paragraphs 12 and 13**

Opportunity has been taken to rearrange the position of various provisions within the code. Because the list of potential personal interests is now in paragraph 7, the paragraphs on the registration of personal interests have been simplified and shortened.

## Gender neutrality of language

### **23. To amend the code throughout to ensure gender neutrality of language**

To signal the fact that the principles of the code refer both to women as well as men, and promote a more inclusive approach, we propose to make the language of the code gender neutral and replace gender-specific language such as 'he', or 'him', with 'he or she', or 'him or her'.

*Q8. Is there a better, more user-friendly way of ensuring the text is gender neutral, for example, would consultees consider that amending the wording to say 'you' instead of 'he or she' or 'him or her' would result in a clearer and more accessible code for members?*

# Annex A

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S T A T U T O R Y   I N S T R U M E N T S

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**[2007] No. [xxx]**

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND AND WALES

### The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order [2007]

<i>Made</i> - - - - -	xxx
<i>Laid before Parliament</i>	xxx
<i>Coming into force</i> - - -	xxx

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government makes the following Order in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 50(1) and (4), 81(2) and (3), and 105(2), (3) and (4) of the Local Government Act 2000<sup>(a)</sup>.

The Secretary of State has consulted in accordance with section 50(5) of that Act.

The Secretary of State is satisfied that this Order is consistent with the principles for the time being specified in an order under section 49 of that Act.

#### **Citation, commencement, application and interpretation**

**1.**—(1) This Order may be cited as the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order [2007] and comes into force on [xxx].

(2) This Order applies—

- (a) in relation to police authorities in England and Wales; and
- (b) in relation to the following authorities in England—
  - (i) a county council;
  - (ii) a district council;
  - (iii) a London borough council;
  - (iv) a parish council;
  - (v) the Greater London Authority;
  - (vi) the Metropolitan Police Authority;
  - (vii) the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority;
  - (viii) the Common Council of the City of London;
  - (ix) the Council of the Isles of Scilly;
  - (x) a fire and rescue authority;
  - (xi) a joint authority;
  - (xii) the Broads Authority; and

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<sup>(a)</sup> 2000 c.22.

(xiii) a National Park authority,  
and references to “authority” are construed accordingly.

### **Model Code of Conduct**

**2.**—(1) The Secretary of State here issues a model code as regards the conduct which is expected of members and co-opted members of authorities and that code is set out in the Schedule to this Order.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (3) to (6), all the provisions of the model code in the Schedule to this Order are mandatory.

(3) The following provisions of the model code in the Schedule are not mandatory for authorities which are not operating executive arrangements—

- (a) sub-paragraph (b) in the definition of “meeting”;
- (b) the words “or its executive’s” and “, or area committees” in the definition of “meeting”;  
and
- (c) paragraphs 8(6), 8(7)(b), 10, 11(1)(b) and 11(2).

(4) The following provisions of the model code in the Schedule are not mandatory for police authorities, the Greater London Authority, the Metropolitan Police Authority, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, a fire and rescue authority and a joint authority—

- (a) sub-paragraph (b) in the definition of “meeting”;
- (b) the words “or its executive’s” and “, or area committees” in the definition of “meeting”;  
and
- (c) paragraphs 5(b)(iii), 8(6), 8(7)(b), 9(2)(b)(i), 9(2)(b)(ii), 10, 11(1)(b) and 11(2).

(5) The following provisions are not mandatory for parish councils—

- (a) sub-paragraph (b) in the definition of “meeting”;
- (b) the words “or its executive’s” and “, or area committees” in the definition of “meeting”;  
and
- (c) paragraphs 6, 8(6), 8(7)(b), 9(2)(b)(i), 9(2)(b)(ii), 10, 11(1)(b) and 11(2).

(6) The following provisions are not mandatory for a National Parks authority and the Broads Authority—

- (a) sub-paragraph (b) in the definition of “meeting”;
- (b) the words “or its executive’s” and “, or area committees” in the definition of “meeting”;  
and
- (c) paragraphs 8(6), 8(7)(b), 9(2)(b)(i), 9(2)(b)(ii), 10, 11(1)(b) and 11(2).

### **Disapplication**

**3.** Where an authority has adopted a code of conduct or such a code applies to it, the following shall, where applicable to the authority, be disapplied as respects that authority—

- (a) sections 94 to 98 and 105 to the Local Government Act 1972;
- (b) section 30(3A) of the Local Government Act 1974;
- (c) regulations made or code issued under section 19 and 31 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
- (d) paragraphs 9 and 10 of Schedule 7 to the Environment Act 1995;
- (e) in section 17 of the Audit Commission Act 1998, subsections (1)(b), (3), (5)(b), (7) and (8) and in subsection (2), the words “subject to subsection (3)” and paragraphs (a) and (b);
- (f) section 18 of the Audit Commission Act 1998; and
- (g) any guidance issued under section 66 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.

**Revocation and savings**

4.—(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the following orders are revoked—

- (a) the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2001(a);
- (b) the Parish Councils (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001(b);
- (c) the National Park and Broads Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2001(c);
- (d) the Police Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001(d).

(2) The Orders referred to in paragraph (1) continue to have effect for the purposes of and for purposes connected with —

- (a) the investigation of any written allegation under Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000, where that allegation was made before the date when, pursuant to section 51 of that Act—
  - (i) the authority adopts a code of conduct incorporating the mandatory provisions of the model code of conduct in the Schedule to this Order in place of their existing code of conduct;
  - (ii) the authority revises their existing code of conduct to incorporate the mandatory provisions of the model code of conduct in the Schedule to this Order; or
  - (iii) the mandatory provisions of the model code of conduct in the Schedule to this Order apply to members or co-opted members of the authority under section 51(5)(b) of that Act;
- (b) the adjudication of a matter raised in such an allegation; and
- (c) an appeal against the decision of an interim case tribunal or case tribunal in relation to such an allegation.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

*Name*  
 [Minister for.....]  
 Department for Communities and Local Government

[Date]

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(a) S.I. 2001/3575.  
 (b) S.I. 2001/3576.  
 (c) S.I. 2001/3577.  
 (d) S.I. 2001/3578.

## SCHEDULE

### THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

#### PART 1

##### General Provisions

###### *Interpretation*

In this Code—

“meeting” means any meeting of—

- (a) the authority;
- (b) the executive of the authority;
- (c) any of the authority’s or its executive’s committees, sub-committees, joint committees, joint sub-committees, or area committees;

“member” includes a co-opted member;

“the authority’s monitoring officer”, in relation to parish councils, is construed as referring to the monitoring officer of the district council or unitary county council which has functions in relation to the parish council for which it is responsible under section 55(2) of the Local Government Act 2000; and

“the authority’s standards committee”, in relation to parish councils, is construed as referring to the standards committee of the district council or unitary county council which has functions in relation to the parish council for which it is responsible under section 55(2) of the Local Government Act 2000.

###### *Scope*

1.—(1) A member must observe the authority’s code of conduct whenever he or she—

- (a) conducts the business of the authority;
- (b) conducts the business of the office to which he or she is elected or appointed; or
- (c) acts as a representative of the authority,

and references to a member’s official capacity is construed accordingly.

(2) An authority’s code of conduct does not, apart from paragraphs 2(2)(c), 4 and 5(a), have effect in relation to the activities of a member undertaken other than in an official capacity.

(3) Where a member acts as a representative of the authority—

- (a) on another relevant authority, he or she must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority’s code of conduct; or
- (b) on any other body, he or she must, when acting for that other body, comply with the authority’s code of conduct, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

###### *General obligations*

2.—(1) A member must treat others with respect.

(2) A member must not—

- (a) do anything which may seriously prejudice his or her authority's ability to comply with any of its statutory duties under the equality enactments (as defined in section 33 of the Equality Act 2006);
- (b) bully any person;
- (c) in his or her official capacity, or any other circumstance, intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or is likely to be—
  - (i) a complainant,
  - (ii) a witness, or
  - (iii) supporting the administration of any investigation or proceedings, in relation to an allegation that a member has failed to comply with his or her authority's code of conduct;
- (d) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the authority.

(3) In relation to police authorities and the Metropolitan Police Authority, for the purposes of subparagraph (2)(a) those who work for, or on behalf of, the authority are deemed to include a police officer.

**3. A member must not—**

- (a) disclose information given to him or her in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which he or she believes is of a confidential nature, except where—
  - (i) he or she has the consent of a person authorised to give it;
  - (ii) he or she is required by law to do so; or
  - (iii) the disclosure is—
    - (aa) reasonable and in the public interest;
    - (bb) made in good faith and does not breach any reasonable requirements of the authority;
- (b) prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

**4.—(1)** A member must not in his or her official capacity, or any other circumstance, conduct himself or herself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his or her office or authority into disrepute.

(2) The conduct referred to in paragraph (1) may include a criminal offence including one committed by the member before taking office but for which he or she is not convicted until after that date.

**5. A member—**

- (a) must not in his or her official capacity, or any other circumstance, use or attempt to use his or her position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for himself or herself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage; and
- (b) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the authority—
  - (i) act in accordance with the authority's requirements;
  - (ii) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
  - (iii) have regard to any Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

**6. A member must when reaching decisions—**

- (a) have regard to any relevant advice provided to him or her by—
  - (i) the authority's chief finance officer; and
  - (ii) the authority's monitoring officer; and



- (b) give the reasons for those decisions in accordance with the authority's and any statutory requirements.

## PART 2

### Interests

#### *Personal interests*

7. A member has a personal interest in any matter where—
- (a) it relates to—
    - (i) any employment or business carried on by the member;
    - (ii) any person who employs or has appointed the member;
    - (iii) any person, other than a relevant authority, who has made a payment to the member in respect of his or her election or any expenses incurred by him or her in carrying out his or her duties;
    - (iv) any corporate body which has a place of business or land in the authority's area, and in which the member has a beneficial interest in a class of securities of that body that exceeds the nominal value of £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body (whichever is the lower);
    - (v) any contract for goods, services or works made between the authority and the member or a firm in which he or she is a partner, a company of which he or she is a remunerated director, or a body of the description specified in paragraph (iv);
    - (vi) any gift or hospitality over the value of £25 received by the member;
    - (vii) any land in the authority's area in which the member has a beneficial interest;
    - (viii) any land where the landlord is the authority and the tenant is the member or a firm in which he or she is a partner, a company of which he or she is a remunerated director, or a body of the description specified in paragraph (iv);
    - (ix) any land in the authority's area in which the member has a licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy for 28 days or longer;
  - (b) it relates to his or her membership of or position of general control or management in any—
    - (i) body to which the member is appointed or nominated by the authority;
    - (ii) public authority or body exercising functions of a public nature;
    - (iii) company, industrial and provident society, charity, or body directed to charitable purposes;
    - (iv) body whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, including any political party; and
    - (v) trade union or professional association; or
  - (c) a decision on the matter might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of—
    - (i) the member, one of the member's family or a friend, or any person with whom the member has a close personal association; or
    - (ii) any person who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;
    - (iii) any corporate body in which such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £5,000; or
    - (iv) any body listed in paragraphs (i) to (v) of sub-paragraph (b) in which such persons hold a position of general control or management,
 to a greater extent than the majority of—

- (aa) in the case of authorities with electoral divisions or wards, other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral division or ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision;
- (bb) in the case of the Greater London Authority, other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the Assembly constituency affected by the decision; or
- (cc) in all other cases, other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the authority's area.

*Disclosure of personal interests*

**8.**—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (7), a member with a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

(2) A member with a personal interest in a matter which is a public service interest, need only disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest when he or she addresses the meeting on that matter.

(3) A member with a personal interest of the type mentioned in paragraph 7(a)(vi) need not disclose the nature or existence of that interest to the meeting if the interest was registered more than five years before the date of the meeting.

(4) In relation to a personal interest of a family member, a friend, or any person with whom the member has a close personal association, sub-paragraph (1) only applies where the member is aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the interest.

(5) Where, by virtue of paragraph 13, sensitive information relating to a member is not registered in the authority's register of members' interests (maintained under section 81(1) of the Local Government Act 2000), a member with a personal interest must indicate to the meeting that he or she has a personal interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to that meeting.

(6) Subject to paragraph 11(1)(b), a member with a personal interest in any matter who has made an executive decision in relation to that matter must ensure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of that interest.

(7) In this paragraph—

- (a) a member has a public service interest in a matter where that matter relates to—
  - (i) another relevant authority of which he or she is a member;
  - (ii) another public authority in which he or she holds a position of general control or management; or
  - (iii) a body to which he or she is appointed or nominated by the authority; and
- (b) “executive decision” is to be construed in accordance with any regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000.

*Prejudicial interests*

**9.**—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (3), a member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest.

(2) A member does not have a prejudicial interest in a matter where—

- (a) he or she has a public service interest in the matter, unless—
  - (i) the matter relates to the financial affairs of the body to which that public service interest relates; or

- (ii) the matter relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to that body;
- (b) that matter relates to the functions of the authority in respect of—
  - (i) housing, where he or she is a tenant of the authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to the member’s tenancy or lease;
  - (ii) school meals, transport and travelling expenses, where the member is a guardian or parent of a child in full time education, or is a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
  - (iii) statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where the member is in receipt of, or is entitled to the receipt of such pay from a relevant authority;
  - (iv) an allowance or payment made under sections 173 to 176 of the Local Government Act 1972 or section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
  - (v) an indemnity given under an order made under section 101 of the Local Government Act 2000;
  - (vi) considering the bestowing of the title of freeman on the member; and
  - (vii) setting council tax under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(3) A member does not have a prejudicial interest in a matter where he or she attends a meeting for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the matter, provided the meeting agrees that the member may do so and after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, the member withdraws from the room where the meeting is being held.

(4) In this paragraph, a member has a public service interest in a matter where that matter relates to—

- (a) any of the matters referred to in paragraph 8(7)(a); or
- (b) a charity, a lobbying or philanthropic body of which he or she is a member.

*Overview and scrutiny committees*

**10.**—(1) For the purposes of this Part, a member has a prejudicial interest where he or she is involved in the consideration of a matter at a meeting of an overview and scrutiny committee of the authority or a sub-committee of such a committee and that consideration relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not), or action taken by—

- (a) the authority’s executive;
- (b) another of the authority’s—
  - (i) committees or sub-committees; or
  - (ii) joint committees or joint sub-committees,

of which he or she is, or was at the time of the decision or action, a member and he or she was present for the consideration of that matter.

(2) But sub-paragraph (1) does not apply where that member attends the meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee for the purpose of answering questions or otherwise giving evidence relating to that decision or action.

*Participation in relation to prejudicial interests*

**11.**—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (3), a member with a prejudicial interest in a matter must—

- (a) withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting is being held whenever it becomes apparent that the matter is being considered at that meeting, unless he or she has obtained a dispensation from the authority’s standards committee;
- (b) not exercise executive functions in relation to that matter; and

- (c) not seek improperly to influence a decision about that matter.
- (2) A member with a prejudicial interest in a matter may, unless that interest is of a financial nature or of the type described in paragraph 10, participate in a meeting of the authority's—
  - (a) overview and scrutiny committees; and
  - (b) joint or area committees,
 to the extent that such committees are not exercising functions of the authority or its executive.
- (3) In this paragraph, a member has a public service interest in a matter where that matter relates to—
  - (a) any of the matters referred to in paragraph 8(7)(a); or
  - (b) a charity, a lobbying or philanthropic body of which he or she is a member.

## PART 3

### Registration of Members' Interests

#### *Registration of Members' Interests*

- 12.**—(1) A member must, within 28 days of—
- (i) the provisions of an authority's code of conduct being adopted or applied to that authority; or
  - (ii) his or her election or appointment to office (where that is later),
- register in the authority's register of members' interests (maintained under section 81(1) of the Local Government Act 2000) any personal interest of the type mentioned in paragraph 7(a) or (b), by providing written notification to the authority's monitoring officer.
- (2) A member must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new personal interest or change to any personal interest registered under in paragraph (1), register that new personal interest or change by providing written notification to the authority's monitoring officer.
- (3) Sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) do not apply to sensitive information in relation to which the member has made an application under paragraph 13.

#### *Sensitive information*

- 13.**—(1) Where a member considers that the availability for inspection by the public of information relating to any personal interest which, but for this paragraph, must be registered in the authority's register of members' interests creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that the member or a person who lives with him or her may be subjected to violence or intimidation (in this Code "sensitive information"), the member may, where the monitoring officer considers it appropriate, not include that sensitive information on the register of members' interests.
- (2) A member must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change of circumstances which leads him or her to believe that information excluded from the authority's register of members' interests is no longer sensitive information, notify the authority's monitoring officer of this fact and register the information concerned in the authority's register of members' interests.

### **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

*(This note is not part of the Order)*

The Order contains a model code of conduct as regards the conduct which is expected of members and co-opted members of relevant authorities in England and police authorities in England and Wales. Under section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000, each authority must adopt a code of conduct applying to its members and co-opted members which must incorporate any mandatory provisions of the model code. Under section 51(5) of that Act, where an authority

does not adopt such a code within six months of the Order coming into force, the mandatory provisions of the model code will apply to the members of the authority until it does.

**Article 1** provides that this Order applies to relevant authorities in England and police authorities in England and Wales.

**Article 2** provides that a model code is set out in the Schedule to the Order, and states which of its provisions are mandatory.

**Article 3** revokes—

the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2001(**a**);

the Parish Councils (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001(**b**);

the National Park and Broads Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2001(**c**);

the Police Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001(**d**).

These Orders continue to have effect in relation to allegations made before the date when the new code is adopted or applied to an authority.

The disapplication of certain enactments made by these Orders continues to have effect.

In the **Schedule to the Order**—

**Paragraph 1** of the model code provides that the code applies whenever a member is acting in his or her official capacity, and that it does not apply in other circumstances unless otherwise indicated. Additionally, where a member is acting as a representative of his or her authority, he or she must continue to observe the authority's code, unless he or she is subject to another relevant authority's code, or unless (in relation to any other body) it conflicts with any other legal obligations.

**Paragraph 2** provides that members must treat others with respect and not do anything which compromises the impartiality of those who work for the authority or bully anyone or intimidate persons involved in code of conduct cases.

**Paragraph 3** provides that members must not without consent disclose confidential information they have acquired and must not prevent others from gaining access to information to which they are entitled.

**Paragraph 4** provides that in a member's official capacity and in other circumstances, a member must not conduct himself or herself in a manner which could bring his or her authority into disrepute.

**Paragraph 5** provides that a member must not in his or her official capacity or in other circumstances use his or her position improperly to gain an advantage or confer a disadvantage and that when using or authorising the use of the authority's resources, he or she must act in accordance with the authority's requirements and must not permit those resources to be used for political purposes.

**Paragraph 6** provides that in reaching decisions a member must consider advice given by the chief finance officer and monitoring officer and must give reasons for decisions made.

**Paragraph 7** provides a list of matters which constitute a personal interest in a matter.

**Paragraph 8** provides that a member with a personal interest in a matter must disclose that interest at any meeting at which the matter is considered.

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(a) S.I. 2001/3575.

(b) S.I. 2001/3576.

(c) S.I. 2001/3577.

(d) S.I. 2001/3578.

**Paragraph 9** provides that a member with a personal interest also has a prejudicial interest if the interest could be regarded by a member of the public as so significant that it is likely to prejudice his judgement of the public interest. The paragraph provides that in the circumstances specified a member may regard himself as not having a prejudicial interest.

**Paragraph 10** provides that a member who was involved in making an executive decision on a matter must not be involved in the overview and scrutiny committee's consideration of that matter, except in order to answer questions from that committee.

**Paragraph 11** provides that a member with a prejudicial interest must, unless he has obtained a dispensation, withdraw from any meetings at which the matter is being considered, and must not improperly influence decisions in relation to the matter.

**Paragraph 12** provides that a member must notify the monitoring officer of the personal interests and any change to those interests must also be notified.

**Paragraph 13** provides that a member may notify the monitoring of any sensitive information the availability of which to the public creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that the member or a person who lives with him or her may be subjected to violence or intimidation.

# Annex B

## Your views

We would welcome your views on the issues covered by this consultation paper and any other comments and suggestions you may have.

## Questions

The specific questions which feature throughout the text of this paper are reproduced for ease of reference:

- Q1. Does the proposed text on the disclosure of confidential information strike an appropriate balance between the need to treat certain information as confidential, but to allow some information to be made public in defined circumstances when to do so would be in the public interest?
- Q2. Subject to powers being available to us to refer in the code to actions by members in their private capacity beyond actions which are directly relevant to the office of the member, is the proposed text which limits the proscription of activities in a member's private capacity to those activities which have already been found to be unlawful by the courts, appropriate?
- Q3. Is the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity serving a useful purpose? If the Publicity Code is abolished, do consultees think some or all of its provisions should be promulgated in a different way, eg via guidance issued by local government representative bodies, or should authorities be left to make their own decisions in this area without any central guidance? Should authorities not currently subject to the Publicity Code be required to follow it, or should the current position with regard to them be maintained?
- Q4. Does the proposed text with regard to gifts and hospitality adequately combine the need for transparency as well as proportionality in making public information with regard to personal interests?
- Q5. Does the proposed text relating to friends, family and those with a close personal association adequately cover the breadth of relationships which ought to be covered, to identify the most likely people who might benefit from decisions made by a member, including family, friends, business associates and personal acquaintances?
- Q6. Would it be appropriate for new exceptions to be included in the text as additions to the list of items which are not to be regarded as prejudicial?
- Q7. Is the proposed text relaxing the rules to allow increased representation at meetings, including where members attend to make representations, answer questions, or give evidence, appropriate?

Q8. Is there a better, more user-friendly way of ensuring the text is gender-neutral, for example, would consultees consider that amending the wording to say 'you' instead of 'he or she' or 'him or her' would result in a clearer and more accessible code for members?

Comments should be sent by e-mail or post by 9 March 2007 to:

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## Appendix 2

# CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY

## INTRODUCTION

### **Status of the Code**

1. This Code is issued by the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland and Wales in pursuance of their powers under section 4(1) of the Local Government Act 1986. The Code was drawn up following the consultations with interested parties in local government required by section 4(4) of the Act. It has been approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament. Local authorities are required by section 4(1) of the Act as amended by section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988 to have regard to the Code in coming to any decision on publicity.

### **Why have a Code?**

2. Local authorities are accountable to their electorate. Local accountability requires local understanding. This will be promoted by local authorities explaining their objectives and policies to their electors and ratepayers. In recent years authorities have increasingly used publicity to keep the public informed, and to encourage greater participation. Local authorities also need to tell the public about the services which they provide. Increasingly, local authorities see the task of making the public aware of the services available as an essential part of providing all kinds of services. Good, effective publicity, aimed at improved public awareness of a council's activities, is to be welcomed. This Code is not intended to discourage such publicity.

3. Publicity is, however, a sensitive matter in any political environment, because of the impact which it can have. Expenditure on publicity by some local authorities has been significant. It is essential, therefore, to ensure that local authority decisions on publicity are properly made, in accordance with clear principles of good practice. The purpose of the Code is to set out such principles. It reflects the conventions which should apply to all publicity at public expense, and which traditionally have applied in both central and local government.

4. The principles set out below recognise the political nature of local government. They take account of the fact that some local authority publicity will deal with issues that are controversial because of particular local circumstances, or because of a difference of view between political parties locally or nationally. The principles do not prohibit the publication of information on politically sensitive or controversial issues, nor stifle public debate. They set out the matters a local authority should consider, to safeguard both the proper use of public funds and those members of the public at whom publicity is directed. They apply to all publicity, but some aspects will be especially relevant to publicity which deals with controversial or sensitive issues. The underlying objective of the Code is to ensure the proper use of public funds for publicity.

### **Scope of the Code**

5. The Code is not concerned with the interpretation of section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986. (That section provides that a local authority shall not publish (or assist others to publish) material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.) The Code is concerned with all the other publicity which a local authority may publish. In particular, it highlights factors which should be borne in mind in decisions on publicity which deals with matters or issues which are, politically or otherwise, controversial, but which are not prohibited by section 2.

6. Section 6 of the 1986 Act defines publicity as "any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public". The Code will therefore be relevant across the whole range of local authorities' work. It covers all decisions by a local authority on publicity and most public relations activities, such as paid advertising and leaflet campaigns, and local authority sponsorship of exhibitions and conferences, as well as assistance to others to issue publicity.

7. The Code has no relevance to the methods which a local authority may use to make its views known where these do not involve publicity in the sense of the 1986 Act.

**8.** The Code does not affect the ability of local authorities to assist charities and voluntary organisations which need to issue publicity as part of their work, but it requires local authorities, in giving such assistance, to consider the principles on which the Code is based, and to apply them accordingly.

**9.** By virtue of section 6(6) of the 1986 Act, nothing in the Code is to be construed as applying to any decision by a local authority in the discharge of their duties under the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

## **CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE**

### **Subject matter**

**1.** Local authorities have a variety of statutory powers which enable them to produce publicity and circulate it widely, or to assist others to do so. Those commonly used include the powers in sections 111, 142, 144 and 145 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 69, 88 and 90 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982; but there are several others.

**2.** Some of these powers relate directly to the publishing authority's functions. Others give a more general discretion to publicise matters which go beyond an authority's primary responsibilities. For example, section 142(1A) of the 1972 Act and 88(1) of the 1973 Act authorise local authorities to arrange for the publication within their area of information as to the services available in the area provided by them or by other local authorities; and Section 54 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 empowers local authorities to arrange for the publication within their area of information on questions relating to health or disease.

**3.** This discretion provides an important degree of flexibility, but also heightens the need for a responsible approach to expenditure decisions.

**4.** In considering the subject areas in which publicity is to be issued, the following matters will be important:

- (i) the publicity should be relevant to the functions of the authority.
- (ii) it should not duplicate unnecessarily publicity produced by central government, another local authority or another public authority.

### **Costs**

**5.** Local authorities are accountable to the public for the efficiency and effectiveness of their expenditure, in the first instance through the audit arrangements.

**6.** For publicity, as for all other expenditure, the aim should therefore be to achieve the greatest possible cost-effectiveness.

**7.** To achieve this, there may well be cases where the benefit of higher expenditure to gain better presentation or improve other aspects of publicity will justify the extra cost.

**8.** Local authorities should therefore always have in mind the extent to which expert advice is needed for publicity.

**9.** In some cases publicity may justify its cost by virtue of savings which it achieves. More commonly it will be necessary to take a view of the importance of the unquantifiable benefits as compared with other uses to which the resources could be put.

**10.** In deciding whether the nature and scale of proposed publicity, and consequently its cost, are justified, the following matters will be relevant:

- (i) whether the publicity is statutorily required or is discretionary.
- (ii) where it is statutorily required, the purpose to be served by the publicity.
- (iii) whether the expenditure envisaged is in keeping with the purpose and expected effect of the publicity.

## **Content and Style**

**11.** Local authorities produce a variety of publicity material. It ranges from factual information about the services provided by the authority, designed to inform clients or attract new ones, to material necessary to the administration of the authority, such as staff recruitment advertising. There will also be publicity to explain or justify the council's policies either in general, as in the annual report, or on specific topics, for example as background to consultation on the line chosen for a new road.

**12.** Any publicity describing the council's policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation or both.

**13.** Where publicity is used to comment on, or respond to, the policies and proposals of central government, other local authorities or other public authorities, the comment or response should be objective, balanced, informative, and accurate. It should aim to set out the reasons for the council's views, and should not be a prejudiced, unreasoning or political attack on the policies or proposals in question or on those putting them forward. Slogans alone will not be an adequate means of justifying or explaining the authority's views or their policy decisions.

**14.** Publicity relating to the provision of a service should concentrate on providing factual information about the service.

**15.** In some cases promotional publicity may be appropriate - for example about the local authority's sports and leisure facilities or about tourist attractions.

**16.** Publicity touching on issues that are controversial, or on which there are arguments for and against the views or policies of the council, is unavoidable, particularly given the importance of wide consultation whenever material issues arise. Such publicity should be handled with particular care. Issues must be presented clearly, fairly and as simply as possible, although councils should not over-simplify facts, issues or arguments. Again, it is unlikely that slogans alone will achieve the necessary degree of balance, or capture the complexities of opposing political arguments.

**17.** Publicity should not attack, nor appear to undermine, generally accepted moral standards.

**18.** Publicity campaigns by local authorities are appropriate in some circumstances: for example, as part of consultation processes where local views are being sought, or to promote the effective and efficient use of local services and facilities, or to attract tourists or investment. Publicity campaigns may also be an appropriate means of influencing public behaviour or attitudes on such matters as health, safety, crime prevention or equal opportunities.

**19.** Legitimate concern is, however, caused by the use of public resources for some forms of campaigns, which are designed to have a persuasive effect. Publicity campaigns can provide an appropriate means of ensuring that the local community is properly informed about a matter relating to a function of the local authority and about the authority's policies in relation to that function and the reasons for them. But local authorities, like other public authorities, should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy.

## **Dissemination**

**20.** The main purposes of local authority publicity are to increase public awareness of the services provided by the authority and the functions it performs; to allow local people to have a real and informed say about issues that affect them; to explain to electors and ratepayers the reasons for particular policies and priorities; and in general to improve local accountability.

**21.** Information and publicity produced by the council should be made available to all those who want or need it. Local authorities should not discriminate in favour of, or against, persons or groups in the compilation and distribution of material for reasons not connected with the efficiency and effectiveness of issuing the publicity.

**22.** Where material is distributed on matters closely affecting vulnerable sections of the community - for example, the elderly - particular care should be taken to ensure that it is unambiguous, readily intelligible, and unlikely to cause needless concern to those reading, seeing or listening to it.

**23.** Local authority newspapers, leaflets, other publicity distributed unsolicited from house to house and information on websites are able to reach far wider audiences than publicity available

on application to the council. Councils should give particular consideration to the use of electronic and other new media communication systems. However, councils should ensure that they do not rely solely on such mechanisms and that they do not exclude those without access or easy access to such systems.

**24.** Such publicity should be targeted as appropriate for its purposes, taking particular care with material touching on politically controversial issues.

**25.** there is no paragraph 25

**26.** Local authority newspapers or information bulletins are a special case. They are often a cost-effective means of disseminating information, or facilitating consultation and can provide a means for local people to participate in debate on decisions the council is to take. The advantage of using websites and other information technology for consultations should also be considered. Inevitably such publications will touch on controversial issues and where they do they should treat such issues in an objective and informative way, bearing in mind the principles set out in paragraphs 11-19 of the Code.

**27.** Where it is important for information to reach a particular target audience, consideration should be given to using the communications networks of other bodies, for example those of voluntary organisations, and making use of electronic communication systems.

## **Advertising**

**28.** Advertising, especially on billboards or on television and radio, is a highly intrusive medium. It can also be expensive. It may however provide a cost-effective, efficient means of conveying public information to the widest possible audience. Advertising on local radio networks has, for example, been used as a relatively inexpensive means of telling potential clients about local authority services. Advertising can also be the most cost-effective means of publicising a local authority's activities on promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area.

**29.** The primary criterion for decisions on whether to use advertising should be cost-effectiveness.

**30.** Advertisements are not normally likely to be appropriate as a means of explaining policy or commenting on proposals, since an advertisement by its nature summarises information, compresses issues and arguments, and markets views and opinions.

**31.** Advertising in media which cover an area significantly wider than that of the authority is not likely to be an appropriate means of conveying information about a local authority's policies as opposed to attracting people to the authority's area or to use its facilities.

**32.** The attribution of advertising material leaflets and other forms of publicity that reach the public unsolicited should be clearly set out.

**33.** It is not acceptable, in terms of public accountability, to use the purchase of advertising space as a disguised means of subsidy to a voluntary, industrial or commercial organisation. Such support should be given openly through the normal grant arrangements. However, the conditions attached to a grant may require the provision of publicity, including publicity for the work of the authority.

**34.** Any decision to take advertising space in a publication produced by a voluntary, industrial or commercial organisation should be made only on the grounds that it provides an effective and efficient means of securing the desired publicity.

**35.** Local authorities should never use advertising as a means of giving financial support to any publication associated with a political party.

## **Recruitment Advertising**

**36.** Local authorities have respected in their staff employment policies the tradition of a politically impartial public service. Their recruitment publicity should reflect this tradition, and the fact that local authority staff are expected to serve the authority as a whole, whatever its composition from time to time.

**37.** The content of recruitment publicity and the media chosen for advertising job vacancies should be in keeping with the objective of maintaining the politically independent status of local authority staff.

**38.** Advertisements for staff should not be placed in party political publications.

## **Individual Councillors**

**39.** Publicity about individual councillors may include the contact details, the positions they hold in the Council (for example, member of the Executive or Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee), and their responsibilities. Publicity may also include information about individual councillors' proposals, decisions and recommendations only where this is relevant to their position and responsibilities within the Council. All such publicity should be objective and explanatory, and whilst it may acknowledge the part played by individual councillors as holders of particular positions in the Council, personalisation of issues or personal image making should be avoided.

**40.** Publicity should not be, or liable to misrepresentation as being, party political. Whilst it may be appropriate to describe policies put forward by an individual councillor which are relevant to her/his position and responsibilities within the Council, and to put forward her/his justification in defence of them, this should not be done in party political terms, using political slogans, expressly advocating policies of those of a particular political party or directly attacking policies and opinions of other parties, groups or individuals.

## **Elections, referendums and petitions**

**41.** The period between the notice of an election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members. However, it is acceptable for the authority to respond in appropriate circumstances to events and legitimate service enquiries provided that their answers are factual and not party political. Members holding key political or civic positions should be able to comment in an emergency or where there is a genuine need for a member level response to an important event outside the authority's control. Proactive events arranged in this period should not involve members likely to be standing for election.

**42.** The Local Authorities (Referendums) (Petitions and Directions) (England) Regulations 2000 (which apply under the Local Government Act 2000 to county councils, district councils and London borough councils) prohibit an authority from incurring any expenditure to

- Publish material which appears designed to influence local people in deciding whether or not to sign a petition requesting a referendum on proposals for an elected mayor;
- Assist anyone else in publishing such material; or
- Influence or assist others to influence local people in deciding whether or not to sign a petition.

Publicity in these circumstances should, therefore, be restricted to the publication of factual details which are presented fairly about the petition proposition and to explaining the council's existing arrangements. Local authorities should not mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view in relation to petitions generally or on a specific proposal.

**43.** County councils, district councils and London borough councils should ensure that any publicity about a referendum under Part II of the Local Government Act 2000 (the 2000 Act) either prior to or during the referendum period is factually accurate and objective. The referendum period means the period beginning with the date on which proposals under Part II of the 2000 Act are sent to the Secretary of State and ending with the date of the referendum. The publicity should not be capable of being perceived as seeking to influence public support for, or opposition to, the referendum proposals and should not associate support for, or opposition to, the proposals with any individual or group. Local authorities must conform with any specific restrictions on publicity activities which are required by Regulations under section 45 of the 2000 Act.

## **Assistance to others for publicity**

**44.** The principles set out above apply to decisions on publicity issued by local authorities. They should also be taken into account by local authorities in decisions on assistance to others to issue publicity. In all such decisions local authorities should, to the extent appropriate:

- (a) incorporate the relevant principles of the Code in published guidance for applicants for grants;
- (b) make the observance of that guidance a condition of the grant or other assistance;
- (c) undertake monitoring to ensure that the guidance is observed.

**45.** It is appropriate for local authorities to help charities and voluntary organisations by arranging for pamphlets or other material produced and paid for by the organisation to be available for collection by the public in public libraries and other suitable locations. Such material should not offend against any legal provision, (authorities may be able to draw on their powers of well-being in section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000) but (subject to this) any such facility should be made available on a fair and equal basis.

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE****MEMBER INDUCTION AND TRAINING  
23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007****Report of Head of Legal and Human Resources/Monitoring  
Officer****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform the Committee and seek views on the proposals for Member induction and training after the May elections.

**This report is public**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(1) That the report be noted, and that Members' views be sought.**

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 As Members will be aware, the terms of reference of the Standards Committee include the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct within the Council.

1.2 It is felt that the May elections and the proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct will combine to provide a welcome opportunity to raise the profile of the Committee and its work.

**2.0 Proposal Details**

2.1 Following the elections in May 2007, it is intended to provide general induction training for elected Members, followed by more specialised training relating to the work of the various Committees to which Members may be appointed.

2.2 At this stage, arrangements are in their preliminary stages, but it is proposed to hold two Induction Day sessions on Tuesday 8th May from 5.30pm - 8.30 pm at Lancaster Town Hall and Thursday 10th May from 10am -1pm at Lancaster Town Hall. These sessions would be open to both newly elected and returning members. At this stage there is no detailed outline for the Induction Day. There is likely to be an introduction by the Chief Executive covering the general structure of the Council, possibly followed by sessions on the Code of Conduct and declaration of interests, and on IT and other support available for Members.

- 2.3 One possibility is for food to be provided before/after the Induction Day, with a tour of the building, and perhaps the opportunity for each Service Head to have a stand/table so that Members can meet key officers and learn about the work of each department without having to listen to a series of presentations. It would seem that one way of raising the profile of the Standards Committee would be for the independent members of the Committee to be represented at the Induction Days, perhaps with a stand/table as a focus on the Committee's work. Members' views on this are sought.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that following the Induction Days, there will be a more detailed session for Members on Code of Conduct issues, and again it is felt that a contribution from the Chairman and/or the other independent members of the Committee might be useful especially for new members, and would give a different perspective from that given by the officer presentation. To enable all Members to attend, it is likely that such a session would be repeated at different times of the day, and the current proposals are for the sessions to be held on the 31st May (afternoon), 1st June (morning) and 4th June (evening).
- 2.5 Elected Members will be appointed to the various Committees of the Council at the Annual Council Business Meeting on the 21st May 2007, and following that, arrangements will be made for specific training for Standards Committee members. The independent members of the Committee will be included in this training, and this will provide the first opportunity for the new Committee to meet on an informal basis. This is likely to be on the 5th June 2007.
- 2.6 The Monitoring Officer also intends to contact the Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils (LAPTC) to arrange a training session on the new Code of Conduct for parish clerks and councillors after the May elections, and this may also be followed by visits to individual parish councils or groups of parish councils on request. The independent members of the Committee may wish to be involved in this area of work also.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

- 3.1 Members' views are sought, and in particular the views of the independent members of the Committee as to their input to the induction and training process.

<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
There is budgetary provision for the general induction training, and there are no financial implications arising specifically from this report.
<b>SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS</b>
The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comments.



**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
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**PROCEDURE FOR CONSIDERING REPORTS ON  
INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED BREACHES OF COUNCIL  
PROTOCOLS  
23rd February 2007**

**Report of Head of Legal and Human Resources/Monitoring  
Officer**

<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT</b>
To establish a procedure for the Committee to consider reports on the investigation of alleged breaches of local protocols.
<b>This report is public.</b>

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the Committee confirm that it would wish to follow a procedure for considering reports on investigations relating to local Protocols that is similar to the procedure for considering reports on investigations initiated by the Standards Board.

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Members will recall that the Council's Constitution contains a number of Protocols relating to the conduct of Members. Breach of a local Protocol is not a breach of the Code of Conduct, and therefore falls outside the remit of the Standards Board for England, and outside the Local Government Act 2000, and must be dealt with locally.

1.2 The Terms of Reference of this Committee include the consideration of reports referred from the Monitoring Officer. In the case of reports relating to matters outside the Code of Conduct, the Committee has limited powers in the event that there is found to have been unsatisfactory conduct. This was confirmed by the High Court and the Court of Appeal in the case of Broadland District Council ex parte Lashley in 2001.

1.3 If the Standards Committee finds that a Member's conduct has fallen short of the standards properly to be expected of a Councillor, its powers are limited to the "naming and shaming" of the individual member, the offering of advice to that member, or a recommendation to the Council for the removal of the member from any office, appointment or Committee or Sub-Committee (although it is recognised that this is subject to challenge, and may be circumvented by political groups under the rules of proportional representation). Equally, having considered the matter, it is

open to the Standards Committee to dismiss the complaint, or simply suggest changes to working practices to prevent such a problem or complaint arising in the future.

- 1.4 The Monitoring Officer is currently investigating an allegation of a breach of a local Protocol. This is the first occasion on which the Committee has been required to consider an allegation of a breach of Protocol, and it has come to light that whilst the Committee has in place a procedure for dealing with the determination of allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct, as this is prescribed by Regulations, it has never formally applied that procedure to the consideration of breaches of Protocol.

## **2.0 Proposal Details**

- 2.1 The Committee is therefore asked to consider how it wishes to deal with reports on investigations of alleged breaches of local Protocols.

- 2.2 Members will recall that in respect of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003 provide that where a monitoring officer conducts an investigation, he shall make one of the following findings:

- (i) that he considers that there has been a failure to comply with the code of conduct of the authority concerned, (“a finding of failure”) or
- (ii) that he considers that there has not been a failure to comply with the code of conduct of the authority concerned, (“a finding of no failure”)

He must then prepare a written report concerning his investigations and his findings.

- 2.3 Where the report concerns a “finding of no failure”, it must be referred to the Standards Committee, and the Committee must consider the report and make one of the following findings:

- (i) that it accepts the monitoring officer’s finding of no failure (“a finding of acceptance”), or
- (ii) that the matter should be considered at a hearing of the Standards Committee

- 2.3 Guidance from the Standards Board states that where the Standards Committee is considering a report concerning a “finding of no failure”, it should simply consider the written report; it should not seek to interview witnesses or take representations from the parties, and should not hear from the investigating officer. The Committee’s role at this stage is to decide whether, based on the facts set out in the report, it agrees with the finding in the report or believes there is a case to answer.

- 2.4 If the Monitoring Officer finds that there has been a breach, or if the Committee finds that there is a case to answer, there are procedures in place for the hearing process, and for establishing a sub-committee to deal with the hearing.

- 2.5 In the interests of consistency, it would seem appropriate for the Committee to deal with reports on the investigation of alleged breaches of local Protocol in a similar way. That is, if the Monitoring Officer’s report does not find that there has been a breach of Protocol, then the Committee should consider the written report and decide whether it accepts this finding or whether it considers that there is a case to answer. If the Committee considers that there is a case to answer, a hearing would be arranged using the same procedures that would be used for a Code of Conduct case.

Likewise, if the Monitoring Officer's report found that there had been a breach of Protocol, a hearing would be arranged in the same way

**3.0 Details of Consultation**

3.1 There has been no consultation. However, the proposal follows the established procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct cases.

**4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)**

4.1 The options open to the Committee are to approve the proposed procedure, or to determine an alternative procedure for dealing with reports on alleged breaches of local Protocols. The officers' recommendation would be to approve the proposed procedure which is consistent with the statutory procedure for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

**5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 The Committee is recommended to approve the proposed procedure.

<p><b>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b>  <b>(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</b></p> <p>The proposed procedure will provide for a fair hearing in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>	
<p><b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b></p> <p>Financial Services have not been consulted.</p>	
<p><b>SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS</b></p> <p>The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.</p>	
<p><b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b></p> <p>Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comments.</p>	
<p><b>MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS</b></p> <p>The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.</p>	
<p><b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b></p> <p>None</p>	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Mrs. S. Taylor  <b>Telephone:</b> 01524 582025  <b>E-mail:</b> STaylor@lancaster.gov.uk  <b>Ref:</b> ST</p>

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**STANDARDS COMMITTEE****UPDATE ON WORKLOAD OF STANDARDS BOARD AND  
LOCAL CASES****23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007****Report of Head of Legal and Human Resources/ Monitoring  
Officer****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update the Committee on both the national and local position of the Standards Board workload.

**This report is public**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(1) That the report be noted.**

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This report updates Members on the number and type of complaints dealt with by the Standards Board for England, and on the complaints submitted to the Standards Board in respect of City Councillors.

**2.0 The National Position**

2.1 From the 1st April to the 31st October 2006, the Standards Board received 1996 allegations, compared with 2427 in the same period the previous year. Of these, 62% were made by members of the public, 32% by councillors, 4% by Council officers, and 2% by others.

2.2 19% of the allegations were referred for investigation; 81% were not.

2.3 Of the allegations referred for investigation, 49% related to parish councils, 24% to district councils, 11% to unitary councils, 8% to metropolitan councils, 4% to county councils, 3% to London boroughs, and 1% to other authorities.

2.4 Of the allegations referred for investigation, 27% related to prejudicial interests, 22% to bringing the authority into disrepute, 13% to failure to disclose a personal interest, 11% to a failure to treat others with respect, 11% to using position to confer or secure an advantage, 1% to failure to register a financial interest, and 15% other.

2.5 The outcome of investigation was no further action in 61% of cases, no evidence of a breach in 31%, 5% referred to the Monitoring Officer for local determination and 3% referred to the Adjudication Panel for England.

**3.0 The Local Position**

3.1 At the last ordinary meeting of the Committee in December 2005, it was reported that there were currently 6 local cases being investigated; 4 by Ethical Standards Officers in respect of City Councillors and 2 by the then Monitoring Officer in respect of Parish Councillors.

3.2 Members will recall that the Committee considered the report in respect of the two parish councillors at its meeting on the 13th September 2006, and accepted the Monitoring Officer's findings that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct.

3.3 The four cases investigated by the Ethical Standards Officers resulted in no further action. In one case only was there found to be a technical breach of the Code of Conduct. The allegations in these cases related to bringing the authority into disrepute, improperly securing an advantage, failing to treat others with respect, and prejudicial interest.

3.4 During 2006, nine allegations were made to the Standards Board in respect of seven City Councillors. These related to a failure to reply to correspondence, and to the declaration and registration of interests. In respect of eight of the allegations, the Standards Board decided that they should not be investigated. One was referred for local investigation, and the investigation is currently being undertaken by the Monitoring Officer.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comments.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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