



## NOTICE OF MEETING

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# Standards Committee

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MONDAY, 22ND DECEMBER, 2008 at 19:30 HRS - CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH ROAD, WOOD GREEN, N22 8LE.

MEMBERS: Diakides, Khan, Lister, Mallett, Reid, Whyte, Williams and Winskill

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS: Ms I. Francis, Mr R. Lovegrove, Ms C. Sykes and Mr A. Loyd.

### AGENDA

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair will consider the admission of any late items of urgent business.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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.

A member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if 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 judgment of the public interest **and** if this interest affects their financial position or the financial position of a person or body as described in paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct **and/or** if it relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to them or any person or body described in paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct.

**4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (PAGES 1 - 4)**

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2008.

**5. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**6. MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT**

Monitoring Officer's report on Standards Committee issues arising since the last meeting.

**7. RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER ENTITLED 'COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL: REAL PEOPLE, REAL POWER - CODES OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES (PAGES 5 - 54)**

(Report of the Monitoring Officer) To allow consideration by the Committee of a draft response to the recently published Government consultation paper and seek the Standards Committee's agreement to an appropriate final response to be sent by the deadline of 24 December 2008.

**8. RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER**

(Report of the Monitoring Officer) To discuss arrangements on the recruitment of an Independent Member of Standards Committee. **TO FOLLOW**

**9. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

**10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following item is likely to be the subject of a motion to exclude the press and public from the meeting as it contains information classified as exempt under the Local Government Act 1985 in that it contains information relating to an individual.

**11. RECENT DETERMINATION BY STANDARDS BOARD INTO COMPLAINT NUMBER SBE21513.08 (PAGES 55 - 78)**

To consider the Standards Board response to issues raised concerning Complaint SBE21513.08.

**12. NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS**

Yuniea Semambo  
Head of Member Services  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
River Park House  
225 High Road  
Wood Green  
London N22 8HQ

Jeremy Williams  
Principal Committee Co-Ordinator  
London Borough of Haringey  
Tel: 020 8489 2919  
Fax: 020 8489 2660  
Email: [jeremy.williams@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:jeremy.williams@haringey.gov.uk)

12 December 2008

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**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2008**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>MEMBERS:</b> | Councillors Diakides, Khan, Mallett, Whyte and Winskill |
|-----------------|---|

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>INDEPENDENT MEMBERS:</b> | Mr R. Lovegrove (Chair), Ms A. Loyd and Ms C. Sykes. |
|-----------------------------|--|

Apologies                      Councillor Lister, Reid and Williams  
   Ms I. Francis

| <b>MINUTE NO.</b> | <b>SUBJECT/DECISION</b>  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>STCO18.</b>    | <b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b><br><br>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Williams, Reid and Lister, and from Independent Member Irene Francis.   |
| <b>STCO19.</b>    | <b>URGENT BUSINESS</b><br><br>The Chair agreed to the admission of one item of urgent business, 'Receiving and Considering Recommendations from the Standards Board for England in relation to complaint number SBE21513.08'. This item would be considered under New Items of Urgent Business at item 11.   |
| <b>STCO20.</b>    | <b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b><br><br>There were no declarations of interest.   |
| <b>STCO21.</b>    | <b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b><br><br><b>RESOLVED:</b><br><br>That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2008 be confirmed and signed.  |
| <b>STCO22.</b>    | <b>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b><br><br>There were no announcements from the Chair.  |
| <b>STCO23.</b>    | <b>MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT</b><br><br>The Monitoring Officer notified the Committee that one complaint had been received under the old arrangements, and that the report from the Standards Board for England would be considered at the meeting.<br><br>Two complaints had been received under the post May 2008 arrangements, with one having been considered by an Assessment Sub-Committee already. A further Assessment Sub-Committee was being set up to consider the other complaint. |
| <b>STCO24.</b>    | <b>GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER ENTITLED "COMMUNITIES IN</b>  |

**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2008**

**CONTROL: REAL PEOPLE, REAL POWER CODES OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES”**

The committee received a report on the recently published Government consultation paper to agree a response to be provided from Haringey prior to the 24 December 2008 deadline for receipt.

The committee agreed that the Monitoring Officer would, in conjunction with both political groups, produce a draft response that could be discussed at a special meeting to be held in December 2008 if required.

It was noted that the document included provision for the establishment of a National Code of Conduct for Officers; doubt was expressed over the appropriateness of Standards Committee Members commenting on this area.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That a detailed commentary on the proposals be circulated to the committee in due course.
2. That a draft be circulated to the Whips of both political groups, to allow input into the consultation from non-Committee Members of both parties.
3. That a meeting of the Committee to consider this response be arranged in December 2008 as necessary.

**STCO25. DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS**

The committee received a report containing draft guidance for the public on how complaints against Members were to be assessed and processed by the Standards Committee and its Sub-Committees.

Following a discussion amongst the Committee, Members requested that the guidance be agreed subject to a number of alterations being made, as reflected in the resolutions below.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the timescale for acknowledgement in the criteria be amended to state that a response will be sent “within two working days”.
2. That the wording be amended to encourage the complainant to include as much specific information as possible, and to state that the form was merely the first stage of the investigation, with the Monitoring Officer determining the complaint’s validity.
3. That a paragraph be included in the Council’s complaints booklet advising on how to make a complaint against a Member.
4. That the information also be placed on the Council’s website.
5. That, subject to the above, the guidance be approved.

**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2008**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <p><b>STCO26.</b></p> | <p><b>RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b></p> <p>The committee received a report agreeing the recruitment process for an independent Member of the Standards Committee to take office from May 2009.</p> <p>The Chair informed the committee of an arrangement where one Independent Member would step down every year, to facilitate a rolling 'freshening' of independent Membership of the committee.</p> <p>Members agreed a mechanism similar to that used in the municipal year 2007-08 for the recruitment of the previous new Independent Member. They requested that an equalities monitoring form be included on a separate sheet of paper with the form, in addition to several minor grammatical changes to the text. Officers agreed to check the current figure of payable allowance prior to the advert being issued through the agreed channels.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the recommendations of the report be agreed, subject to the above alterations.</p> |
| <p><b>STCO27.</b></p> | <p><b>TRAINING</b></p> <p>The Monitoring Officer briefed the Committee on training options for both Members of both the Committee and the Council as a whole.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that it would benefit from training on the operation of Hearings in the new year, which the Monitoring Officer agreed to arrange. Members agreed to feedback input to the Monitoring Officer on what other areas of training they would find useful.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That training on Hearings be arranged for Members of the Standards Committee, to take place in the new year.</p>   |
| <p><b>STCO28.</b></p> | <p><b>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</b></p> <p>The Chair agreed to the admission of one item of urgent business, 'Receiving and Considering Recommendations from the Standards Board for England in relation to complaint number SBE21513.08'.</p> <p>Consideration of part of this item was subject to a motion to exclude the press and public to enable discussion of confidential information within the meaning of Section 63 of the Local Government Act 2000.</p> <p>The Committee received the recommendations of the Standards Board for England following their consideration of a complaint against a Haringey Councillor.</p> <p>The Ethical Standards Officer had found that although the Councillor had broken the code, no further action was required to be taken. The Standards</p>  |

**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2008**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
|                       | <p>Committee was also advised to review the guidance offered to Members to help them understand their responsibilities with regards to exempt material.</p> <p>The Committee expressed their concern over several aspects of the judgement, although they were unable to come to a consensus view on an appropriate response. The Chair agreed to write to the Standards Board on behalf of the Independent Members only, stating their concern over the recommendations providing, and requesting a review. Although only writing on behalf of the Independent Members, he would also note 'general unhappiness' across the Committee itself with the decision.</p> <p>The committee agreed to defer any other action in relation to this matter until a further response from the Standards Board had been forthcoming.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Chair of the Standards Committee write on behalf of the Independent Members to the Standards Board stating their unhappiness with the provided verdict as outlined above.</li> <li>2. That further action by the committee in this regard be deferred until a response from the Standards Board was forthcoming.</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>STCO29.</b></p> | <p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The next scheduled meeting was due to take place on Thursday January 15<sup>th</sup> 2009, at 7:30pm in the Civic Centre.</p>  |

ROGER LOVEGROVE

Chair





Haringey Council

Agenda item:

**[No.]****Standards Committee****On 22 December 2008**

Report Title: Response to Government Consultation Paper entitled "Communities in control: Real people, real power Codes of conduct for local authority members and employees"

Forward Plan reference number:

Report of: **Monitoring Officer**

Wards(s) affected: All

Report for: Non Key Decision

**1. Purpose**

1.1 To allow consideration by the Committee of a draft response to the recently published Government consultation paper and seek the Standards Committee's agreement to an appropriate final response to be sent by the deadline of 24 December 2008.

**2. Introduction by Cabinet Member**

**3. Recommendations**

3.1 Members are asked to note the consultation letter attached at Appendix 1 and the consultation paper attached at Appendix 2 and the draft response proposed at Appendix 3.

Report Authorised by: John Suddaby, Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: John Suddaby – Monitoring Officer

**4. Director of Finance Comments**

4.1 There are no financial implications

**5. Head of Legal Services Comments**

The legal implications are included in the body of the report

**6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

6.1 CLG consultation document entitled "Communities in control: Real people, real power Codes of conduct for local authority members and employees"

6.2 Local Authorities(Model code of Conduct) Order 2007

6.3 Relevant Authorities(General Principles) Order 2001

**7. Report**

At its last meeting the Standard Committee considered the consultation paper issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government entitled 'Communities in control: Real people, real power Codes of conduct for local authority members and employees'. At that meeting, the Committee agreed to meet in December to agree and appropriate response in time for the deadline of 24 December 2008.

Members are asked to consider the draft response attached at Appendix 3 and agree a final version for sending to the Chief Executive who will respond to the consultation request on behalf of the authority.

**8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications

**9. Legal Implications**

9.1 The legal implications are included in the body of the report

**10. Equalities Implications**

10.1 There are no equalities implications

**11. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs**

11.1 Appendix 1 CLG consultation letter.

11.2 Appendix 2 CLT Consultation document

11.3 Appendix 3 Draft response from Standards Committee



To Chief Executives of:  
County Councils and District Councils in England  
London Borough Councils  
The Greater London Authority  
National Park Authorities  
The Broads Authority

1 October 2008

The Clerk of:  
City of London  
Council of the Isle of Scilly  
Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities  
Fire and Civil Defence Authorities  
Police Authorities in England and Wales

The Clerk of:  
Parish and Town Councils in England

Dear Colleague,

**Communities in control: Real people, real power: Codes of conduct for local authority members and employees – A consultation**

I am writing to draw your attention to the above consultation paper which was published on the Communities and Local Government website on 1 October. I also enclose a paper copy of the consultation for your consideration.

You will see that this is the next in a series of Communities in Control consultation documents following the publication of the Local Government Empowerment White Paper, *Communities in Control: Real people, real power*, on 9 July, and building on work still in progress from the 2006 White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*.

This paper invites views on proposals for revising the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 and the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001. It also seeks views on the proposed introduction of a model code of conduct for local government employees. Particular questions on which we would welcome comments are summarised at Annex A to the paper.

Copies of the consultation paper are being sent to all principal local authorities, parish councils and other organisations and individuals who have a particular interest in these issues. If you wish to comment, please send responses either by post to:

Paul Rowsell, Deputy Director, Local Democracy  
Communities and Local Government  
5/A1, Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

Tel 020 7944 5962 Fax 020 7944 4109  
Email:conductcode@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Karl Holden  
Conduct and Council Constitutions Team  
Communities and Local Government  
Zone 5/B2, Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

Or by e-mail to: [conductcode@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:conductcode@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

By **Wednesday 24 December 2008**.

Any queries you may have about this letter or the enclosed paper should be directed to Karl Holden (tel: 0207 944 5962; [conductcode@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:conductcode@communities.gsi.gov.uk)).

You will also be interested to know that, as announced in the *Communities in control: Real people, real power: Improving local accountability* consultation paper, we will be consulting at the end of October on proposals to revise the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity. A paper copy of the consultation paper will be sent to you on publication.

Yours sincerely

**Paul Rowsell**



Communities in control: Real people, real power  
Codes of conduct for local authority members and  
employees

**A consultation**



[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)  
community, opportunity, prosperity

Communities in control: Real people, real power  
Codes of conduct for local authority members and  
employees

**A consultation**

October 2008

Department for Communities and Local Government: London

Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU  
Telephone: 020 7944 4400  
Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

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# Chapter 1: The consultation and how to respond

## Communities in control consultation papers

- 1.1 The White Paper, *Communities in control: Real people, real power*, is about passing power into the hands of local communities. It sets out a range of policies to achieve this, building on work still in progress from the 2006 White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*.
- 1.2 This paper is the next in a series consulting on a number of policy commitments. Future consultation papers include a consultation on proposals to revise the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity, which is due to be published at the end of October. This paper invites views on proposals for revising the model code of conduct for local authority members (“the members’ code”), principally to clarify its application to members’ conduct in their non-official capacity. This paper also invites views on proposals for associated changes to the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001 which sets out the general principles which govern the conduct of local authority members. Finally, it seeks comments on proposals to introduce a requirement for authorities to incorporate a code of conduct for employees, based on a statutory model code of conduct, in to the terms and conditions of employment of their employees’ (“the employees’ code”).

## About this consultation

- 1.3 The proposals in this consultation paper relate to relevant authorities in England and police authorities in Wales.
- 1.4 Following the local government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, issued in October 2006, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 established a more locally-based conduct regime for local authority members centred on local authority standards committees. Under the new devolved regime, the Standards Board for England has become a light-touch strategic regulator, responsible for monitoring the operation of the conduct regime and giving support and guidance to standards committees and monitoring officers in discharging their new functions.
- 1.5 As part of the changes to the conduct regime, a new model code of conduct for local authority members, the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007, was introduced with effect from May 2007, on the basis that the provisions of the members’ code would be reviewed in light of early experience of its practical operation.
- 1.6 Chapter 2 of this paper seeks views on proposals to clarify the members’ code in its application to members’ conduct when acting in a non-official capacity. It also seeks views on the operation of, and proposed revisions to, the members’ code, including reconfiguring the members’ code into two distinct sections, the first dealing with members’ conduct in their official capacity, the second dealing with members’ conduct in their non-official capacity. Finally, it seeks views on associated amendments to the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001 to clarify its application to members’ conduct in their non-official capacity.

- 1.7 Chapter 3 of this paper seeks views on the proposed introduction of a model code of conduct for local government employees, which will become part of such employees' terms and conditions of employment.
- 1.8 Particular questions on which we would welcome comments are set out in each chapter and summarised in **Annex A**. In order to aid your consideration of the proposed amendments to the current members' code, the substance of the 2007 code is reproduced at **Annex B**.
- 1.9 We are minded, subject to responses to this consultation, to implement the proposals in this consultation paper, so that they come into effect in line with the local government elections 2009.

## Who are we consulting?

- 1.10 This is a public consultation and it is open to anyone to respond to this consultation document. We would, however, particularly welcome responses from local authority members, local authority monitoring officers, local government employees, national representative bodies, local government partners and trade unions. **The consultation period runs for 12 weeks to 24 December 2008.**

## How to respond

- 1.11 Your response must be received by 24 December 2008 and may be sent by e-mail or post to:

Karl Holden  
Conduct and Council Constitutions Team  
Communities and Local Government  
Zone 5/B2, Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

e-mail: [conductcode@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:conductcode@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

If you are replying by e-mail please title your response 'Response to Model Code consultation'.

It would be helpful if you could make clear in your response whether you represent an organisation or group, and in what capacity you are responding.

## What will happen to the responses?

- 1.12 The Department will take account of the responses received to this consultation before taking decisions on the legislation that will form the revised members' code, the general principles order and the new employees' code.
- 1.13 Within three months of the close of the consultation period we will analyse the responses to the consultation and produce a summary of them. This summary will be published on the Department's website at [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

## Publication of responses – confidentiality and data protection

- 1.14 Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published, or disclosed 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.
- 1.15 If you want any of the information that you provide to be treated as confidential you should 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.
- 1.16 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.
- 1.17 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.

## The consultation criteria

- 1.18 The UK Government has adopted a code of practice on consultations. Please see **Annex C** of this document for the criteria that apply under this code, and advice about who you should contact if you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process.

## Additional copies

- 1.19 You may make copies of this document without seeking permission. If required, printed copies of the consultation paper can be obtained from Communities and Local Government Publications, whose contact details may be found at the front of this document. An electronic version can be found at the Consultation Section of the Department's website at: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk).

## In context – previous consultations and relevant legislation

- 1.20 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 for members which would include changes to the rules on personal and prejudicial interests. This announcement followed a consultation by the Standards Board for England, *A Code for the future*, in February 2005 and the Discussion Paper *Conduct in English Local Government*, issued by the then Office for the Deputy Prime Minister in December 2005.
- 1.21 The policy proposals took form in the January 2007 consultation document, *Consultation on Amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members*, which proposed the combination of the four different model codes of conduct that existed at the time (for local authorities, parish councils, national parks and police authorities) into a single consolidated model code.

- 1.22 The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 came into force on 3 May 2007. With the members' code now in place for over a year, we believe this is an appropriate time to examine how well it has functioned in practice and consider any revisions that may be required. The proposed amendments to the members' code set out in this paper reflect discussions with the Standards Board and, in particular, their experience of the practical operation of the 2007 members' code over the last year.
- 1.23 Following the 2006 local government White Paper and the introduction of the 2007 members' code, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 made provision clarifying the law in relation to the application of the conduct regime to the conduct of members in their non-official capacity. This paper therefore also invites comments on proposals to revise the members' code and the general principles order to address the issue of the application of the conduct regime to the conduct of members in their non-official capacity.

### Code of conduct for local government employees

- 1.24 In August 2004, the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister issued the consultation paper, *A Model Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees*. The paper consulted on a draft code defining the minimum standards of conduct that employees of relevant authorities would be expected to observe on carrying out their duties. The 2004 consultation was followed by further inquiries and consultations on matters relating to the conduct regime for local government.
- 1.25 The Department restated its commitment to introduce a model employees' code, under Section 82 of the Local Government Act 2000, in the local government White Paper 2006. However, in light of the above inquiries and consultations, and the introduction of the 2007 members' code, it was decided that the implementation of an employees' code should be delayed until the Department had an opportunity to consider the employees' code in the context of the wider review of the conduct regime for local government and the lessons learned from the implementation of the new members' code.
- 1.26 With the implementation of the new devolved conduct regime and our proposals to amend the members' code, drawing on the experience of its first year of operation, we consider that the time is right to also consult on proposals to introduce a model employees' code.

# Chapter 2: Code of conduct for local authority members

## What is the code of conduct for?

- 2.1 The public has a right to expect high standards of conduct from their elected and co-opted members. The standards of conduct expected of local authority members are set out in the members' code, which is underpinned by the ten general principles. By signing up to the members' code, a member is actively taking on a formal obligation to abide by its requirements.
- 2.2 The members' code forms the bedrock of the conduct regime and aims to promote the public's trust and confidence in their members and faith in local democracy. It does this by providing a robust set of standards of behaviour for members to abide by and work within. In doing this, the code also protects members from unreasonable expectations of behaviour being put upon them. Since May 2008, allegations that a member has failed to comply with the provisions of the members' code are considered by local authority standards committees.
- 2.3 The current members' code is set out in the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 which applies to members of relevant authorities in England and of police authorities in Wales. On its introduction, the Government gave an undertaking that the effectiveness of the code would be reviewed after it had been in operation for some time. We believe, drawing on the Standards Board's practical experience that the members' code is, broadly, operating very well. However, as it has been in force for over a year, we consider that it is now appropriate to review the code.
- 2.4 Most importantly, we propose that the members' code be restructured by revoking the existing Order and making a new one. We propose that the new members' code will be differently formatted to the existing code, making it easier to interpret and clearer in its application, for instance by dividing it into two sections: the first dealing with members' conduct when acting in an official capacity and reflecting what is in the current code, the second dealing with members' conduct in their non-official capacity.

## Application of the code to members' conduct in their non-official capacity

- 2.5 Trust in our local authority members is one of the cornerstones of local democracy. Members should inspire trust and confidence from those who elected them, set an example of leadership for their communities and should be expected to act lawfully even when they are not acting in their role as members.
- 2.6 This view was supported by those who responded to the Standards Board for England's consultation on the members' code in 2005. Responses indicated a clear view that a member's conduct in a non-official capacity was an issue that they considered should be covered by the members' code, particularly where that conduct amounts to a criminal offence.
- 2.7 It has always been our intention for the members' code to apply to a limited extent to the conduct of members in a non-official capacity. We wish now to clarify which provisions of the

members' code apply in a member's official capacity and to put beyond doubt which provisions apply to a member's conduct in a non-official capacity.

- 2.8 The need to clarify what conduct in a member's non-official capacity is covered by the members' code arose as a consequence of a court judgment in 2006. This cast doubt on the ability of the code to cover members' conduct not linked to the performance of their public duties. As was made clear by Ministers during the passage of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, we consider that certain behaviour, even when there is no direct link to the member's official role, can have an adverse effect on the level of public trust in local authority members and local government as a whole.
- 2.9 We propose therefore that the new members' code should, in the section covering the conduct of members in their non-official capacity, contain the following provision prohibiting particular conduct where that conduct would constitute a criminal offence:

"Members must not bring their office or authority into disrepute by conduct which is a criminal offence".

### Consultation Question 1:

Do you agree that the members' code should apply to a member's conduct when acting in their non-official capacity?

## Definition of 'criminal offence' and 'official capacity'

- 2.10 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gave the Secretary of State the power to define, for the purposes of the members' code, what constitutes a 'criminal offence'. We propose for the purpose of the members' code, that 'criminal offence' be defined as any criminal offence for which the member has been convicted in a criminal court, but for which the member does not have the opportunity of paying a fixed penalty instead of facing a criminal conviction.
- 2.11 Our intention is that offences capable of attracting fixed penalty notices should be excluded from the remit of the conduct regime. We consider that this approach will ensure that the most minor criminal offences, for example minor motoring offences, parking offences and dropping litter as well as cautions and orders falling short of a criminal conviction by a court, will not be included in the remit of the members' code. However, serious criminal offences which we consider should come under the remit of the members' code, such as assault, harassment, fraud and offences relating to child pornography will be included in the remit of the code.
- 2.12 We propose that the Standards Board for England will issue guidance for local authority standards committees on how a criminal offence should be treated in its application to the conduct regime.

**Consultation Question 2:**

Do you agree with this definition of ‘criminal offence’ for the purpose of the members’ code? If not, what other definition would you support, for instance should it include police cautions? Please give details.

2.13 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 also gave the Secretary of State power to define, for the purposes of the members’ code, what constitutes ‘official capacity’.

2.14 We propose that for the purposes of the members’ code, ‘official capacity’ be defined as being engaged in the business of your authority, including the business of the office to which you are elected or appointed, or acting, claiming to act or giving the impression that you are acting as a representative of your authority.

**Consultation Question 3:**

Do you agree with this definition of ‘official capacity’ for the purpose of the members’ code? If not, what other definition would you support? Please give details.

## Offending abroad

2.15 We also propose that the members’ code would engage with conduct committed in a foreign country, where that conduct constitutes a criminal offence in that country, but only where the conduct would also constitute a criminal offence if it was committed in the UK. However, the code would only apply if the individual was convicted in the country in which the offence was committed.

**Consultation Question 4:**

Do you agree that the members’ code should only apply where a criminal offence and conviction abroad would have been a criminal offence if committed in the UK?

## What does this mean?

2.16 Our proposals would have the effect of providing that the only conduct in a member’s non-official capacity which is engaged by the code, is conduct which constitutes a criminal offence, as defined in paragraph 2.10 above. The code may only then be applied to that conduct when the evidence that the member’s conduct constituted a criminal offence is provided by the criminal conviction of the member in the courts.



2.17 This would mean, for example, that a member who was convicted of a criminal offence of assault or harassment could be held to have breached the code, even if the conduct, which lead to the conviction took place entirely outside the member's official capacity.

## Criminal conviction of a member

2.18 It should be noted that a criminal conviction resulting in a custodial sentence of more than three months without the option of paying a fine is already covered by section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972, with the member automatically disqualified from office for five years. We are not proposing any changes to this legislation.

## The conduct regime

2.19 At present, investigations into alleged breaches of the members' code are triggered by a written allegation made to the standards committee of the local authority concerned. We propose that this continue to be the case when dealing with allegations of misconduct in relation to a member's conduct in their non-official capacity.

2.20 Where the allegation involves criminal activity that is, at the time of the allegation being made, being investigated by the police or prosecuted through the courts, we propose that the standards committee or the Standards Board, as the case may be, would cease their investigation process until the criminal process had been completed. Any subsequent action under the conduct regime in respect of a member's private conduct would follow the conclusion of the criminal procedure. The member would not be suspended during the period of the criminal process.

2.21 For the purpose of the conduct regime, the criminal process will be considered to have been completed at the conclusion of any appeals process.

### Consultation Question 5:

Do you agree that an ethical investigation should not proceed until the criminal process has been completed?

## Proposed revisions to the members' code

2.22 This consultation paper also seeks views on the following amendments which we propose to make to the provisions of the existing code. The proposed amendments reflect discussions with the Standards Board and, in particular, the Board's experience of the practical operation of the code over the last year.

2.23 In order to aid your consideration of our proposed amendments to the members' code, the substance of the present code is reproduced at **Annex B** to this paper. Guidance on the provisions of the members' code is available on the Standards Board for England's website at [www.standardsboard.gov.uk](http://www.standardsboard.gov.uk)

### Parish councils

2.24 It has been suggested that article 2(5) of the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 be amended to apply paragraph 12(2) to parish councils, to make it mandatory for parish councils that a member with a prejudicial interest may make representations at a meeting only if members of the public are able to attend that meeting for the same purpose. Currently, if a parish council wishes this provision to apply, it must make a conscious decision to adopt paragraph 12(2) into its code. This amendment would save unnecessary administration and ensure consistency across parish councils.

### Membership of other bodies

2.25 It has been suggested that paragraphs 8(1)(a)(i) and (ii) of the current members' code be amended to clarify that the sections are referring to other bodies that you are a member of or which exercise functions of a public nature, putting it beyond doubt that this is not a reference to the authority itself.

### Personal interests

2.26 It has been suggested that current wording of paragraph 8(1)(a) of the members' code could be amended to clarify that a member is required to register a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25 in his or her register of members' interests.

### Prejudicial interests

2.27 It has been suggested that paragraph 10(2) of the code be amended to remove the double negative in the current drafting, to make it clear that a prejudicial interest exists where the business of your authority affects your financial position or the financial position of a person listed in paragraph 8 of the code or it relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or those persons listed in paragraph 8 of the code.

2.28 It has been suggested that the meaning of 'determining' in paragraph 10(2)(b) could be clarified to include variation, attaching, removing or amending conditions, waiving or revoking applications.

2.29 It has also been suggested that paragraph 10(2)(c) could be amended to clarify that a member would not have a prejudicial interest in the business of the authority where that business related to giving evidence before a local authority standards committee hearing regarding an allegation that a member of the authority had failed to comply with the code.

### Registration of members' interests

2.30 We propose that any new members' code would take into account any existing registration of members' interests. This will ensure that members who have already registered their interests in line with the 2007 model code do not have to repeat the process when the revised members' code is introduced.

**Consultation Question 6:**

Do you think that the amendments to the members' code suggested in this chapter are required? Are there any other drafting amendments which would be helpful? If so, please could you provide details of your suggested amendments?

**Consultation Question 7:**

Are there any aspects of conduct currently included in the members' code that are not required? If so, please could you specify which aspects and the reasons why you hold this view?

**Consultation Question 8:**

Are there any aspects of conduct in a member's official capacity not specified in the members' code that should be included? Please give details.

## Legislative context

- 2.31 The current members' code is set out in the Schedule to the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 made under powers conferred on the Secretary of State by section 50 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 2.32 Section 183 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 inserted, into section 50 of the Local Government Act 2000, a requirement for the Secretary of State to specify which provisions of the members' code apply in relation to a member's conduct when acting in an official capacity and which provisions apply when not acting in an official capacity. A provision may only be specified to apply to members' conduct when not acting in an official capacity if the conduct it prohibits constitutes a criminal offence. The power in section 50 of the Local Government Act 2000 permits the Secretary of State to define for the purposes of the members' code what is meant by "criminal offence" and what is meant by "official capacity".
- 2.33 We propose that the existing Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 be revoked and a new, revised Order would be made to reflect our proposed amendments and that part of the code applies to a member's conduct in their official capacity and part of it would apply to a member's conduct in their non-official capacity.
- 2.34 Provision is also made in section 183 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for members to give to their authority an undertaking to observe the new code within a period prescribed by the Secretary of State. We propose that members will have two months from the date their authority adopts the new code to give a written undertaking that they will observe their authority's code. Failure to do so will mean that they cease to be members of the authority.

**Consultation Question 9:**

Does the proposed timescale of two months, during which a member must give an undertaking to observe the members' code, starting from the date the authority adopts the code, provide members with sufficient time to undertake to observe the code?

# Proposed amendments to the General Principles

## What are the General Principles?

2.35 The ten General Principles, contained in the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001, are based on the seven principles of public life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The principles underpin the provisions of the members' code, which must be consistent with these principles.

2.36 The ten general principles are reproduced below. The principles govern the conduct of members, and a failure to act in accordance with them may lead to a failure to comply with the members' code.

### The General Principles

#### *Selflessness*

1. Members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

#### *Honesty and Integrity*

2. Members should not place themselves in a situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

#### *Objectivity*

3. Members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

#### *Accountability*

4. Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

#### *Openness*

5. Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

#### *Personal Judgement*

6. Members may take account of the views of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.

#### *Respect for Others*

7. Members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers, and its other employees.

*Duty to uphold the law*

8. Members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

*Stewardship*

9. Members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently and in accordance with the law.

*Leadership*

10. Members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

## Proposed revisions

2.37 We propose that the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001 be amended to make clear which principles govern the conduct of members when acting in an official capacity and which principles will apply to the conduct of members when acting in a non-official capacity, where the member's conduct would constitute a criminal offence.

2.38 We propose that the General Principles Order be amended by providing that the 10 existing principles apply to a member when acting in an official capacity and by adding a new principle which would be specified as applying to a member acting in a non-official capacity, where the member's conduct would constitute a criminal offence. We propose that the following be added to the Schedule of the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001:

*Duty to abide by the law*

Members should not engage in conduct which constitutes a criminal offence.

**Consultation Question 10:**

Do you agree with the addition of this new general principle, applied specifically to conduct in a member's non-official capacity?

## Definition of 'criminal offence' and 'official capacity'

2.39 Section 49 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Secretary of State to define what constitutes a 'criminal offence' and what constitutes 'official capacity' in the context of the General Principles Order. For the purposes of the revised General Principles Order, we propose that 'criminal offence' be defined as any conduct that has resulted in a criminal conviction.

**Consultation Question 11:**

Do you agree with this broad definition of 'criminal offence' for the purpose of the General Principles Order? Or do you consider that 'criminal offence' should be defined differently?

2.40 We propose that for the purposes of the revised General Principles Order, 'official capacity' be defined as "being engaged in the business of your authority, including the business of the office to which you are elected or appointed, or acting, claiming to act or giving the impression that you are acting as a representative of your authority".

**Consultation Question 12:**

Do you agree with this definition of 'official capacity' for the purpose of the General Principles Order?

## Legislative Context

2.41 The Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001 was made under powers conferred on the Secretary of State in section 49 and 105 of the Local Government Act 2000. Section 183 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 modified section 49 of the 2000 Act and it is this modification that requires the Secretary of State to specify which general principles apply to a person when acting in an official capacity and when acting in a non-official capacity.

# Chapter 3: Model code of conduct for local government employees

## Is an employees' code needed?

- 3.1 A code of conduct for local government employees (“employees’ code”) should provide the staff of an authority with an effective ethical framework within which to work and it should give that authority’s citizens confidence that an authority’s staff are working on their behalf in an appropriate manner.

### **Consultation Question 13:**

Do you agree that a mandatory model code of conduct for local government employees, which would be incorporated into employees’ terms and conditions of employment, is needed?

## The employees' code in context

- 3.2 In August 2004, the (then) Office of the Deputy Prime Minister consulted on a model code of conduct for local government employees. Responses indicated that the model code of conduct consulted on was not adequate, but also that the universal application of a code to all staff would be needlessly bureaucratic as all employees would be subject to the same code regardless of their position. There was support for following the model of the Welsh code of conduct, which only applies to a certain category of defined senior officer. Alternatively, the code could be restricted to those who exercise executive, regulatory or overview and scrutiny powers under the authority’s scheme of delegation to officers.
- 3.3 Another view in response to the consultation paper was that certain aspects of the code (eg registration of interests), could be limited to senior officers while other more universal aspects should be applicable to all - for instance, it is beyond question that all employees should behave with honesty and integrity.
- 3.4 Many local authorities already have a code of conduct for employees in addition to, or part of, their standard terms and conditions of employment. These codes range from simple statements agreeing to act with propriety to comprehensive documents covering everything from political neutrality to intellectual property matters. These codes of conduct are also integrated into the authority’s discipline procedures.
- 3.5 It is not intended that the employees’ code be a burden on authorities or employees. The code should not constrain an authority’s ability to develop its own code reflecting local needs and conditions. We consider that authorities should be free to adopt supplementary provisions beyond the employees’ code in order to provide their staff with an effective ethical framework within which to work.



## Application of the employees' code

- 3.6 We propose that the employees' code would apply to all relevant authorities and police authorities in Wales, as defined in Section 49 of the Local Government Act 2000. We are proposing that a model employees' code - a model code that authorities may augment if they wish - be introduced, which will be incorporated into local government employees' terms and conditions of employment.
- 3.7 However, we do not propose to apply the employees' code where it is not needed, for instance to employees in professions that are covered by their own code of conduct; firefighters, teachers, community support officers, solicitors etc.

### Consultation Question 14:

Should we apply the employees' code to firefighters, teachers, community support officers, and solicitors?

### Consultation Question 15:

Are there any other categories of employee in respect of whom it is not necessary to apply the code?

- 3.8 We propose a two-tier model. The first tier, drawing on the Code of Conduct (Qualifying Local Government Employees) (Wales) Order 2001, will apply equally to all authority employees and will enshrine the core values that it is reasonably expected every authority employee would abide by. The second tier, drawing on the members' code, will apply to 'qualifying employees', that is; either senior officials or those officials carrying out delegated functions.
- 3.9 With the members' code in place, and members having to abide by that code, there is a reasonable expectation that officials undertaking functions delegated to them by members would have to abide by the same conduct regime as members when performing those functions.

## Proposed core values

### The model employees' code: core values for all employees

#### General principles

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all local government employees. The role of such employees is to serve their employing authority in providing advice, implementing its policies and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, they must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

#### Accountability

Employees are accountable, and owe a duty to, their employing authority. They must act in accordance with the principles set out in this Code, recognising the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.

#### Political neutrality

Employees, excluding political assistants, must follow every lawfully expressed policy of the

authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work. Where employees are politically restricted, by reason of the post they hold or the nature of the work they do, they must comply with any statutory restrictions on political activities.

### Relations with members, the public and other employees

Mutual respect between employees and members is essential to good local government and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis. Employees of relevant authorities should deal with the public, members and other employees sympathetically, efficiently and without bias.

### Equality

Employees must comply with policies relating to equality issues, as agreed by the authority, in addition to the requirements of the law.

### Stewardship

Employees of relevant authorities must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the authority for personal use unless authorised to do so.

### Personal interests

An employee must not allow their private interests or beliefs to conflict with their professional duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interest or the interests of others.

Employees should abide by the rules of their authority about the declaration of gifts offered to or received by them from any person or body seeking to do business with the authority or which would benefit from a relationship with that authority. Employees should not accept benefits from a third party unless authorised to do so by their authority.

### Whistleblowing

Where an employee becomes aware of activities which that employee believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with the model code of conduct for employees, the employee should report the matter, acting in accordance with the employees rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and with the authority's confidential reporting procedure or any other procedure designed for this purpose.

### Treatment of Information

Openness in the dissemination of information and decision making should be the norm in authorities. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate to a wide audience. Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a member, relevant authority employee or other person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions. Nothing in this Code can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.

### Appointment of staff

Employees of the authority, when involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff, must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any accusation of bias, those employees must not be involved in any appointment, or any other decision relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other employee, or prospective employee, to whom they are related or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside work.

## Investigations by monitoring officers

Where a monitoring officer is undertaking an investigation in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 and associated regulations, employees must comply with any requirement made by that monitoring officer in connection with such an investigation.

### Consultation Question 16:

Does the employees' code for all employees correctly reflect the core values that should be enshrined in the code? If not, what has been included that should be omitted, or what has been omitted that should be included?

## Beyond the core values

### Who are the 'qualifying employees'?

- 3.10 There are two alternatives for selecting those 'qualifying employees' to which, in addition to the core values of the employees' code, some of the restrictions and expectations of the members' code should apply.
- 3.11 The first is based on the approach taken to determining which posts in an authority are 'politically restricted' under section 3 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and assumes that certain posts are senior or influential enough to warrant controls placed on the activities of postholders. Certain posts would be designated as qualifying employees.
- 3.12 The second is the delegation model, which would see qualifying employees selected on the basis that they perform functions delegated to them by elected members under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### Consultation Question 17:

Should the selection of 'qualifying employees' be made on the basis of a "political restriction" style model or should qualifying employees be selected using the delegation model?

## The model employees' code: values for qualifying employees

### Compromising the impartiality of officers of the authority

A qualifying employee must not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for or on behalf of the authority, either directly or as a response to pressure from others. A qualifying employee should not attempt to force employees to take action or change advice if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

### Using your position improperly

A qualifying employee must not use, or attempt to use, their position improperly either for their or anybody else's advantage or disadvantage.

## Considering advice provided to you and giving reasons

If a qualifying employee seeks advice, or advice is offered to them, on aspects of how the employees' code applies, the qualifying employee must have regard to this advice.

## Personal interest

Qualifying employees must register, within 28 days of taking up their appointment, any interests set out in the categories below. This record of interest must be in writing, to the authority's monitoring officer or, in the case of a parish council, through the parish clerk.

The registration of interests protects the qualifying employee by giving early warning of any possible areas of conflict of interest and provides assurance to the public that the qualifying employee is acting transparently. Only registration of personal interests in areas where there are clear grounds for concern that such an interest could give rise to accusations of partiality in decision making and working practice of the authority are required.

These are:

- Your membership, or position of control or management, in bodies exercising functions of a public nature (that is, carrying out a public service, taking the place of a local or central governmental body in providing a service, exercising a function delegated by a local authority or exercising a function under legislation or a statutory power).
- Any business you might own or have a share in, where that shareholding is greater than £25,000 or have a stake of more than 1/100<sup>th</sup> of the value or share capital of the company.
- Any contracts between the authority and any company you have an interest in, as above.
- Any land or property in the authority's area in which you have a beneficial interest.

A qualifying employee may seek to exempt their personal interests from the register of interests if they consider, for instance that having this information on record might put themselves or others at risk. In such cases, the qualifying employee should discuss the matter with their monitoring officer.

### Consultation Question 18:

Should the code contain a requirement for qualifying employees to publicly register any interests?

### Consultation Question 19:

Do the criteria of what should be registered contain any categories that should be omitted, or omit any categories that should be included?

## Prejudicial interest

A prejudicial interest is considered to be a matter which affects the qualifying employee's financial interest or relates to a licensing or regulatory matter in which he or she has an interest and where a member of the public, who knows the relevant facts, would reasonably think that his or her personal interest is so significant that it is likely to prejudice his or her judgement of the public interest.

A prejudicial interest in a licensing or regulatory matter may stem from a direct financial interest or from a more tangential interest, where for instance approval for a licence may affect a body with which the qualifying employee has a personal interest or will affect him or her personally.

Qualifying employees with a prejudicial interest should declare such an interest. Where possible, they should take steps to avoid influential involvement in the matter. Where this is not possible, their prejudicial interest should be made clear.

### **Consultation Question 20:**

Does the section of the employees' code which will apply to qualifying employees capture all pertinent aspects of the members' code. Have any been omitted?

### **Consultation Question 21:**

Does the section of the employees' code which will apply to qualifying employees place too many restrictions on qualifying employees? Are there any sections of the code that are not necessary?

## **Contractors, partners and part time staff**

3.13 Local authorities have an increasingly complex relationship with the private sector in its work with contractors, partners and part time staff. We consider that rather than attempt to determine centrally when and when not to apply the employees' code not just to local government employees, but those working on behalf of local government, it will be for local authorities themselves to decide, in agreeing contracts, partnership agreements or terms and conditions of employment, if and how the employees' code, in whole or in part, should apply.

## **Parish councils**

3.14 The members' code applies to parish councillors as well as members of larger authorities, and it seems reasonable therefore for the ethical framework of the employees' code to apply to parish council employees. We recognise that the environment that parish councillors operate within is different to that of larger authorities and are conscious that what is considered to be a reasonable expectation in the employees' code for larger councils, may prove to be difficult for parish councils.

3.15 That being the case, we would welcome responses from parish councils on any particular aspect of the employees' code that might present difficulties and how those difficulties could be overcome.

### **Consultation Question 22:**

Should the employees' code extend to employees of parish councils?

## Legislative context

- 3.16 Section 82(7) of the Local Government Act 2000, provides that the provisions of a code made under section 82(1) of that Act will be deemed to be incorporated in employees' terms and conditions of employment.

# Annex A: List of consultation questions

## Chapter 2: Code of conduct for local authority members

- Question 1 Do you agree that the members' code should apply to a member's conduct when acting in their non-official capacity?
- Question 2 Do you agree with this definition of 'criminal offence' for the purpose of the members' code? If not, what other definition would you support, for instance should it include police cautions? Please give details.
- Question 3 Do you agree with this definition of 'official capacity' for the purpose of the members' code? If not, what other definition would you support? Please give details.
- Question 4 Do you agree that the members' code should only apply where a criminal offence and conviction abroad would have been a criminal offence if committed in the UK?
- Question 5 Do you agree that an ethical investigation should not proceed until the criminal process has been completed?
- Question 6 Do you think that the amendments to the members' code suggested in this chapter are required? Are there any other drafting amendments which would be helpful? If so, please could you provide details of your suggested amendments?

- Question 7 Are there any aspects of conduct currently included in the members' code that are not required? If so, please could you specify which aspects and the reasons why you hold this view?
- Question 8 Are there any aspects of conduct in a member's official capacity not specified in the members' code that should be included? Please give details.
- Question 9 Does the proposed timescale of two months, during which a member must give an undertaking to observe the members' code, starting from the date the authority adopts the code, provide members with sufficient time to undertake to observe the code?
- Question 10 Do you agree with the addition of this new general principle, applied specifically to conduct in a member's non-official capacity?
- Question 11 Do you agree with this broad definition of 'criminal offence' for the purpose of the General Principles Order? Or do you consider that 'criminal offence' should be defined differently?
- Question 12 Do you agree with this definition of 'official capacity' for the purpose of the General Principles Order?

### Chapter 3 Model Code of Conduct for local authority employees

- Question 13 Do you agree that a mandatory model code of conduct for local government employees, which would be incorporated into employees' terms and conditions of



employment, is needed?

- Question 14      Should we apply the employees' code to firefighters, teachers, community support officers, and solicitors?
- Question 15      Are there any other categories of employee in respect of whom it is not necessary to apply the code?
- Question 16      Does the employees' code for all employees correctly reflect the core values that should be enshrined in the code? If not, what has been included that should be omitted, or what has been omitted that should be included?
- Question 17      Should the selection of 'qualifying employees' be made on the basis of a "political restriction" style model or should qualifying employees be selected using the delegation model?
- Question 18      Should the code contain a requirement for qualifying employees to publicly register any interests?
- Question 19      Do the criteria of what should be registered contain any categories that should be omitted, or omit any categories that should be included?
- Question 20      Does the section of the employees' code which will apply to qualifying employees capture all pertinent aspects of the members' code? Have any been omitted?

Question 21 Does the section of the employees' code which will apply to qualifying employees place too many restrictions on qualifying employees? Are there any sections of the code that are not necessary?

Question 22 Should the employees' code extend to employees of parish councils?

# Annex B

## SCHEDULE

### THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

#### Part 1

#### General provisions

#### **Introduction and interpretation**

1.—(1) This Code applies to **you** as a member of an authority.

(2) You should read this Code together with the general principles prescribed by the Secretary of State.

(3) It is your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code.

(4) 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 and an appointed member.

(5) In relation to a parish council, references to an authority’s monitoring officer and an authority’s standards committee shall be read, respectively, as references to the monitoring officer and 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(12) of the Local Government Act 2000.

#### **Scope**

2.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (5), you must comply with this Code whenever you—

(a) conduct the business of your authority (which, in this Code, includes the business of the office to which you are elected or appointed); or

(b) act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting as a representative of your authority,  
and references to your official capacity are construed accordingly.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraphs (3) and (4), this Code does not have effect in relation to your conduct other than where it is in your official capacity.

(3) In addition to having effect in relation to conduct in your official capacity, paragraphs 3(2)(c), 5 and 6(a) also have effect, at any other time, where that conduct constitutes a criminal offence for which you have been convicted.

(4) Conduct to which this Code applies (whether that is conduct in your official capacity or conduct mentioned in sub-paragraph (3)) includes a criminal offence for which you are convicted (including an offence you committed before the date you took office, but for which you are convicted after that date).

(5) Where you act as a representative of your authority—

(a) on another relevant authority, you must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority's code of conduct; or

(b) on any other body, you must, when acting for that other body, comply with your 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**

**3.**—(1) You must treat others with respect.

(2) You must not—

(a) do anything which may cause your authority to breach any of the equality enactments (as defined in section 33 of the Equality Act 2006);

(b) bully any person;

(c) intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or is likely to be—

(i) a complainant,

(ii) a witness, or

(iii) involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings,

in relation to an allegation that a member (including yourself) has failed to comply with his or her authority's code of conduct; or

(d) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your authority.

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

**4.** You must not—

(a) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where—

(i) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;

(ii) you are required by law to do so;

(iii) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or

(iv) the disclosure is—

(aa) reasonable and in the public interest; and

(bb) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority; or

(b) prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

**5.** You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.

**6.** You—

(a) must not use or attempt to use your position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage; and

(b) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority—

(i) act in accordance with your authority's reasonable requirements;

(ii) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and

(c) must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

7.—(1) When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by—

(a) your authority's chief finance officer; or

(b) your authority's monitoring officer,

where that officer is acting pursuant to his or her statutory duties.

(2) You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your authority.

Part 2  
Interests

**Personal interests**

8.—(1) You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where either—

(a) it relates to or is likely to affect—

(i) any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority;

(ii) any body—

(aa) exercising functions of a public nature;

(bb) directed to charitable purposes; or

(cc) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union),

of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management;

(iii) any employment or business carried on by you;

(iv) any person or body who employs or has appointed you;

(v) any person or body, other than a relevant authority, who has made a payment to you in respect of your election or any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties;

(vi) any person or body who has a place of business or land in your authority's area, and in whom you have a beneficial interest in a class of securities of that person or body that exceeds the nominal value of £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital (whichever is the lower);

(vii) any contract for goods, services or works made between your authority and you or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi);

(viii) the interests of any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25;

(ix) any land in your authority's area in which you have a beneficial interest;

(x) any land where the landlord is your authority and you are, or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi) is, the tenant;

(xi) any land in the authority's area for which you have a licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy for 28 days or longer; or

(b) a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of a relevant person to a greater extent than the majority of—

(i) (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;

(ii) (in the case of the Greater London Authority) other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the Assembly constituency affected by the decision; or

(iii) (in all other cases) other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of your authority's area.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1)(b), a relevant person is—

(a) a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association; or

(b) any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;

(c) any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or

(d) any body of a type described in sub-paragraph (1)(a)(i) or (ii).

### **Disclosure of personal interests**

**9.**—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (7), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you attend a meeting of your authority at which the business is considered, you 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) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect a person described in paragraph 8(1)(a)(i) or 8(1)(a)(ii)(aa), you need only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest when you address the meeting on that business.

(3) Where you have a personal interest in any business of the authority of the type mentioned in paragraph 8(1)(a)(viii), you need not disclose the nature or existence of that interest to the meeting if the interest was registered more than three years before the date of the meeting.

(4) Sub-paragraph (1) only applies where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest.

(5) Where you have a personal interest but, by virtue of paragraph 14, sensitive information relating to it is not registered in your authority's register of members' interests, you must indicate to the meeting that you have a personal interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to the meeting.

(6) Subject to paragraph 12(1)(b), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must ensure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of that interest.

(7) In this paragraph, "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 interest generally**

**10.**—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority you also have a prejudicial interest in that business 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 your judgement of the public interest.

(2) You do not have a prejudicial interest in any business of the authority where that business—

(a) does not affect your financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in paragraph 8;

(b) does not relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in paragraph 8; or

(c) relates to the functions of your authority in respect of—

- (i) housing, where you are a tenant of your authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
- (ii) school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are 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 you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
- (iv) an allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
- (v) any ceremonial honour given to members; and
- (vi) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

### **Prejudicial interests arising in relation to overview and scrutiny committees**

**11.** You also have a prejudicial interest in any business before an overview and scrutiny committee of your authority (or of a sub-committee of such a committee) where—

- (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by your authority's executive or another of your authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
- (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken, you were a member of the executive, committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee mentioned in paragraph (a) and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken.

### **Effect of prejudicial interests on participation**

**12.—(1)** Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority—

- (a) you must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting considering the business is being held—
  - (i) in a case where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence;
  - (ii) in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at that meeting;unless you have obtained a dispensation from your authority's standards committee;
- (b) you must not exercise executive functions in relation to that business; and
- (c) you must not seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.

(2) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority, you may attend a meeting (including a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee of your authority or of a sub-committee of such a committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.

## Part 3

### Registration of Members' Interests

#### **Registration of members' interests**

**13.—(1)** Subject to paragraph 14, you must, within 28 days of—

- (a) this Code being adopted by or applied to your authority; or
- (b) your election or appointment to office (where that is later),

register in your authority's register of members' interests (maintained under section 81(1) of the Local Government Act 2000) details of your personal interests where they fall within a category mentioned in paragraph 8(1)(a), by providing written notification to your authority's monitoring officer.

(2) Subject to paragraph 14, you must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new personal interest or change to

any personal interest registered under paragraph (1), register details of that new personal interest or change by providing written notification to your authority's monitoring officer.

**Sensitive information**

**14.**—(1) Where you consider that the information relating to any of your personal interests is sensitive information, and your authority's monitoring officer agrees, you need not include that information when registering that interest, or, as the case may be, a change to that interest under paragraph 13.

(2) You must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change of circumstances which means that information excluded under paragraph (1) is no longer sensitive information, notify your authority's monitoring officer asking that the information be included in your authority's register of members' interests.

(3) In this Code, "sensitive information" means information whose availability for inspection by the public creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that you or a person who lives with you may be subjected to violence or intimidation.



# Annex C: Consultation Code of Practice

- A.1 The Government has adopted a code of practice on consultations. The criteria below apply to all UK national public consultations on the basis of a document in electronic or printed form. They will often be relevant to other sorts of consultation.
- A.2 Though they have no legal force, and cannot prevail over statutory or other mandatory external requirements (e.g. under European Community Law), they should otherwise generally be regarded as binding on UK departments and their agencies; unless Ministers conclude that exceptional circumstances require a departure.

## The Consultation Criteria

- Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of
  - 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy
  - Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
  - Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
  - Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
  - Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation coordinator.
  - Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.
- A.3 The full consultation code of practice may be viewed at:  
[www.bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/code/index.asp](http://www.bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/code/index.asp).
- A.4 Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed these criteria? If not, or you have any other observations about ways of improving the consultation process please contact:

Consultation Co-ordinator  
Communities and Local Government  
Zone 6/H10  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

email: [consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk)



**Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Officers**

**Draft response of Standards Committee of Haringey Council to Government Consultation on proposed changes to the Members Code of Conduct**

**Q1 – Do you agree that the Members’ Code should apply to a member’s conduct when acting in their non-official capacity?**

The Standards committee agrees that some conduct in private life can reflect upon a member’s suitability to continue as a member and having to wait until elections give the electorate a chance to remove the member can seriously damage the reputation of an authority and of local government in general. We therefore agree that the Code of Conduct for Members should apply to at least some conduct in a member’s private life.

**Q2 – Do you agree with the definition of “criminal offence” for the purpose of the Members’ Code? If not, what other definition would you support? Please give details.**

The Standards Committee does not agree with the exclusion of criminal offences which result in fixed penalty notices from the definition of criminal offence. It should be up to a complainant and following that the Standards Committee whether such “offences” are judged to be such as to for example bring the Council or their office into disrepute.

The Committee also believes that the Code should cover disclosures of confidential information received in the course of a member’s duties but disclosed in a member’s private life.

**Q3 – Do you agree with this definition of “official capacity” for the purposes of the Members’ Code? If not, what other definition would you support? Please give details.**

The committee agrees with the proposed definition of “official capacity” as “being engaged in the business of your authority, including the business of the office to which you are elected or appointed, or acting, claiming to act or giving the impression that you are acting as a representative of your authority.” However our committee suggests that a more precise definition should be used for “representative” such as that the member was “engaged in the business of a body to which he/she has been appointed by, on the nomination of, or with the approval of the authority.”

**Q4 – Do you agree that the members’ code should only apply where a criminal offence and conviction abroad would have been a criminal offence if committed in the UK?**

The committee agrees with the proposal that the Code should apply to criminal offences committed abroad but disagrees with the proposal that the conviction must arise in the same country as the offence was committed as there is an increasing possibility for criminal convictions to take place not in the country where the offence was committed.

**Q5 – Do you agree that an ethical investigation should not proceed until the criminal process has been completed?**

The Standards Committee does not consider that there should be a limit on making a complaint before conviction. Although this will have to be decided by the Standards Committee on a case by case basis and with the advice of the Monitoring Officer, the Committee believes that there should be no bar on standards investigations and proceedings in advance of conviction. In those circumstances where the Standards Committee decides to proceed with determining a complaint in advance of a criminal trial, evidence of criminal conduct other than a conviction by a criminal court should be admissible as evidence of criminal conduct.

**Q6 – Do you think that the amendments to the Members’ Code suggested in this chapter are required? Are there any other drafting amendments which would be helpful? If so, please could you provide details of your suggested amendments?**

6.1 Registration of Gifts and Hospitality

It is suggested that Paragraph 8(1)(a)(vii) might usefully be amended to clarify that a member is required to register any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25. The current drafting of Paragraph 8(1)(a)(vii) is different from that of other such outside interests, as it refers to “the interests” of the donor or hospitality provider, rather than referring to the donor or hospitality provider itself. This does not fit with the registration requirement in Paragraph 13, as taken literally it requires the member to register “the interests of” the donor or hospitality provider. Accordingly, Paragraph 8(1)(a)(vii) should be amended by the deletion of the words “the interests of”, and Paragraph 13 should be amended by the addition of a new Paragraph 13(3) as follows – “(3) In respect of a personal interest arising under Paragraph 8(1)(a)(vii), you must register both the identity of the person from whom you have received the gift or hospitality and provide details of the gift or hospitality and its estimated value.”

6.2 Prejudicial Interests

Paragraph 10 (1) and (2) could certainly be clarified if they were re-drafted to avoid the current double-negative. An amplification of the meaning of “determination” would be helpful. However, this Paragraph would still remain flawed because of the lack of clarity as to when the determination of an approval, consent, licence, permission is “in relation to” the member. The Council suggests that this be changed to say “determination of an application for approval..... made by you or on your behalf.”

The disapplication of Paragraph 10(2)(c) to giving evidence before a Standards Committee would be welcome.

6.3 Registration of Interests

It is proposed that existing registrations of interests should carry forward when the revised Code is introduced.

6.4 Additional Suggested Amendment - Application to suspended Members

The majority of the Code as currently drafted does not apply to a member when he/she is suspended. The Council suggests an amendment to Paragraph 2(2) to

provide that a member's conduct in relation to his/her authority shall be treated as being in an official capacity notwithstanding that the member was suspended at the time of the conduct

#### 6.5 Additional Suggested Amendment - Disclosure and misuse of confidential information in private life.

The disclosure of confidential information which a member has obtained through their connection with the authority, or its use for personal advantage, in private life, would be an example of serious misconduct, but at present this is not covered by the Code of Conduct. It is necessary to further amend Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000 to refer to conduct which **does** constitute a criminal offence, rather than "**would**" constitute a criminal offence, so it is relatively simple to provide that non-criminal conduct can amount to a breach of the Code, where this is specified in the Code, and then amend Paragraph 2(3), such that Paragraphs 4 and 6(a) can constitute a breach of the Code even where the conduct occurs in private life and does not amount to a criminal offence.

#### 6.6 Additional Suggested Amendment – Value of Shareholdings

The current volatility in the share market makes the present £25k nominal value somewhat arbitrary. The Council therefore suggests that it would be appropriate to amend Paragraph 8(1)(a)(vi) to provide that a member has a personal interest in "any person or body who has a place of business or land in your authority's area, and in whom you have a beneficial interest in the securities of that person or body that exceeds a nominal value of £25,000, a current market value of £25,000 or 1/100th of the total issued share capital".

#### 6.7 Additional Suggested Amendment – Gifts and Hospitality

To update the current £25 threshold for declaration of gifts and hospitality to restore its real value and to conform with the new requirement to declare relevant gifts and hospitality at meetings, it is suggested that the threshold be set at £100, reflecting a level which might possibly influence the member's decision on a matter.

#### 6.8 Additional Suggested Amendment – Close Association

Whether in the Code or in supporting Guidance it is necessary to make it clear that this provision only covers people with whom the member has such a close continuing relationship that a member of the public might reasonably conclude that it is likely to influence the member's perception of the public interest on matters which affect that individual.

#### 6.9 Additional Suggested Amendment – the majority of council tax payers, ratepayer or inhabitants of the electoral division or ward affected by the decision.

The present Paragraph 8(1)(b) is unclear as to whether the comparator in any particular case is **either** council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants, **or** the aggregate of all three categories. In practice, it must be the category which the member comes within for this purpose, otherwise the relatively higher numbers of "inhabitants" would always dominate and make the mention of the other categories redundant. The Council suggests that Paragraph 8(1)(b) be amended to read ".... Than the majority of either the council tax payer, ratepayers or inhabitants of the .... , in any case being a category of which you or the relevant person is a member."

#### 6.10 Additional Suggested Amendment – Disclosure of Personal Interests

Paragraph 9(1) requires disclosures “at the commencement of consideration (of the matter)”. In practice most authorities have disclosures of interest at the start of the meeting, which is advantageous in drawing to members’ attention the need to make disclosures, allowing officers to remind individual members where a member may have forgotten to make such disclosure, and allowing the meeting then to discharge its business without frequent interruption. The Council suggests that Paragraph 9(1) should be amended to reflect this practice, to read “... at the commencement of the meeting or at such later occasion during the meeting as is prescribed by the authority for this purpose, or when the interest becomes apparent.”

#### 6.11 Additional Suggested Amendment – Registration of Sensitive Information

The Council suggests that to formalise the registration of such information, Paragraph 14(1) be amended to read as follows – “When you notify your authority’s Monitoring Officer in writing that you consider that particular information relating to any of your personal interest is sensitive information, and your authority’s Monitoring Officer has notified you in writing that he/she agrees that it is sensitive, you need not.....”

**Q7 – Are there any aspects of conduct currently included in the Members’ Code of Conduct that are not required? If so, please could you specify which aspects and the reasons why you hold this view?**

#### 7.1 Additional Suggested Amendment – Disclosure of Public Service Interests

The Council has not found any benefit from the introduction of Paragraph 9(2) in the 2007 revisions, which also introduced a problem in respect of prejudicial interests, in that by the time a member would come to disclose such an interest, he/she would already have been required to leave the room, thus preventing them from making any disclosure of such interests. Accordingly, we suggest that Paragraph 9(2) be deleted.

**Q8 – Are there any aspects of conduct in a member’s official capacity not specified in the Members’ Code of Conduct that should be included? Please give details.**

#### 8.1 Additional Suggested Amendment – Application to informal meetings, Site Visits and Correspondence

The definition of “meetings” in Paragraph 1(4) is currently very limited. There is public concern at the possible undue influence applied by members in informal meetings and correspondence, for which there is no public access. The Welsh Code for Members has addressed this by extending the definition of “meetings” to include “informal meetings between a member and one or more other members or officers of the authority, other than group meetings”, and by requiring members to disclose that they are members in any correspondence with the authority, even if that correspondence is in a private capacity. This makes the position absolutely clear. It can readily be checked by inspection of correspondence and disclosure of officers’ notes of meetings as background papers when formal decisions come to be taken.

#### 8.2 Additional Suggested Amendment – Application to Ward Councillor Decision-Making

Section 236 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities to arrange for the discharge of functions by a ward

Councillor within that ward. It made no provision for the application of the Members' Code to such discharge of functions. The normal rules on disclosure of personal and prejudicial interests do not apply in this case as there is no "meeting", yet the potential for conflicts of interest are greatly increased where a Councillor is taking decisions in the area in which he/she lives, where his/her family go to school and have their friends, or where he/she has his/her business. The obvious amendment would be to apply Paragraphs 9(6) and 12(1)(b) and (c) to any decision-making under Section 236, and require the recording of any personal interest in the record of the decision.

### 8.3 Additional Suggested Amendment – Private Representations

A dilemma arises where a member wishes to make representations to his/her own authority in a private capacity, for example as a householder in respect of a neighbouring planning application. On the one hand, disclosing in the representation the fact that he/she is a member risks an accusation of improper use of the member's position to influence the decision. On the other hand, as the officers are probably well aware of the identity of the correspondent, failing to disclose this fact can risk an opposite accusation that the member is acting in an underhand manner. The Welsh Members' Code has taken a robust approach and simply provided that a member must disclose the existence and nature of your personal interest when he/she makes representations to the authority on a matter in which he/she has a personal interest and, if the representations are made verbally, must then confirm that interest in writing within 14 days. This satisfactorily resolves this dilemma, enabling the fact of the member's interest to be recorded in the correspondence.

### 8.4 Additional Suggested Amendment – Acting in the Public Interest and having regard to Officers' Advice

The current Code contains no requirement to act in the public interest, as this fundamental requirement is relegated to the General Principles. Equally, the requirement in Paragraph 7(1) to have regard to officer advice is limited to the statutory reports of the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. These provisions are much better covered in the current Welsh Code of Conduct as follows:

"8. In participating in meetings and taking decisions on the business of the authority, you must –

(a) do so on the basis of the merits of the circumstances and in the public interest  
(b) have regard to any relevant advice provided by the authority's officers – in particular by:

- (i) the Chief Finance Officer
- (ii) the Monitoring Officer
- (iii) the Chief Legal Officer, who should be consulted whenever there is any doubt as to the authority's powers to act, or as to whether the action proposed lies within the policy framework agreed by the authority; where the legal consequences of action or failure to act by the authority might have important repercussions."

**Q9 – Does the proposed timescale of two month, during which a member must give an undertaking to observe the Members' Code of Conduct, starting from the date on which the authority adopts the Code, provide members with sufficient time to undertake to observe the Code?**

Firstly, it has been suggested that the provisions of Section 183(7) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 cannot alter the historic fact

that when members gave an undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct, they could not have given a valid undertaking to observe those parts of the Code of Conduct which were at the time ultra vires the Local Government Act 2000. Accordingly, it would appear to be necessary for a member to give a new undertaking before the revised Code can apply to events in the member's private life.

Note, however, that as set out above, it is suggested that the wording of Section 51(4B) of the Local Government Act 2000 ("which would constitute a criminal offence") needs to be amended before the Members' Code of Conduct can apply to conduct which does constitute a criminal offence, and that amendment would be required before members gave such a new undertaking.

Further, it is suggested that the current wording of Section 52(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000, requiring members to give an undertaking to observe the authority's Code of Conduct "for the time being", is capable of interpretation as meaning that it is only an undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct which is adopted by the authority at the time that the undertaking is given. If that interpretation is correct, then a historic undertaking to observe the authority's Code of Conduct would not automatically carry forward to a revised Code of Conduct.

For all of these reasons, the Council agrees that it is appropriate to require members to give a fresh undertaking to observe the revised Code of Conduct following its adoption by the authority of which they are a member. The two month period for such undertakings was applied in 2001, when the Code of Conduct was first adopted by each authority and is perfectly reasonable, but it is equally certain that in some authorities there will be members who fail to give such undertaking within that time. We therefore suggest that it would be appropriate, if the opportunity exists to amend the 2000 Act, to provide a basic requirement to give an undertaking within two months, and that if an undertaking is not given within that period then the member concerned is not disqualified but is prohibited from acting as a member of that authority until he/she has given such an undertaking.

**Q10 – Do you agree with the addition of a new General Principle, applied specifically to conduct in a member's non-official capacity, to the effect that a member should not engage in conduct which constitutes a criminal offence?**

The General Principles are supposed to be the enduring principles which underlie the Code. As such they should not be changed unless there are overriding reasons for doing so. Whilst this exhortation is clear well-intended, it is much wider than the Members' Code of Conduct, which is supposedly limited to criminal conduct which relates in some manner to the member's position as a member. In addition, the core principle is already substantially covered by General Principles 2 (Honesty and Integrity) and 8 (Duty to uphold the Law). Accordingly the Council is of the view that adding a general and unrestricted Principle of not engaging in criminal conduct is unnecessary.

**Q 11. Do you agree with the broad definition of "criminal offence" for the purpose of the General Principles Order? Or do you consider that criminal offence should be defined differently?**

As set out above, the Council does not consider that it is necessary or helpful to change the General Principles for this purpose. However, if a change is to be made it should be limited to criminal conduct "which compromises the reputation of the member's office or authority, or their ability to perform their functions as a member".



**Q 12. Do you agree with this definition of “official capacity” for the purpose of the General Principles Order?**

The Consultation Paper suggests that this new General Principle should be limited to conduct when “you are engaged in the business of your authority, including the business of the office to which you are elected or appointed, or acting, claiming to act or giving the impression that you are acting as a representative of your authority.”

This is completely at odds with the intention as set out above to implement the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 in order to apply the Code of Conduct to criminal conduct in private life. If implemented as suggested, it would mean that the General Principles were narrower than the Code of Conduct which is supposed to give effect to them. Accordingly, the Council considers that the new General Principle, if adopted, should apply to criminal conduct “which compromises the reputation of the member’s office or authority, or their ability to perform their functions as a member”.

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