

STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2023

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

Recommendation

- 1. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that:**
 - (a) the Committee considers the draft Member Code of Conduct; and**
 - (b) the Committee recommends a Code of Conduct to be adopted by full Council as the County Council's Code of Conduct.**

Background

2. In January 2021, the Committee considered about progress with the Local Government Association (LGA) model Code of Conduct. The LGA had developed this as part of its work in supporting the sector to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. The LGA offered this as a template for councils to adopt as a whole and/or with local amendments.
3. Having participated in consultation about content, the Committee agreed to consider the Code once published. Having done so, the Committee asked that various elements were considered for inclusion in a Code of Conduct which would ideally be adopted by all the District Councils in Worcestershire, as well as the County Council and Fire and Rescue Authority.
4. The Committee considered the draft 'pan Worcestershire' Code at its meeting on 27 April 2022. This was based on the LGA Code with small amendments drafted by Monitoring Officers to reflect feedback from Standards Committees at each Council. However, the Committee agreed that consideration of the item should be deferred to a future meeting. This was to enable it to receive feedback about the outcome of consideration of the proposed Code of Conduct by Worcestershire district councils and subject to a briefing being arranged on the revised Code for all members of the Council.
5. The briefing for Councillors was held online on 19 October, and nineteen councillors attended. Members acknowledged the desire to keep local 'tweaks' to the LGA Code. The general view expressed at the briefing was that the Council should adopt the LGA Code as written without the proposed local additions. It was suggested this would prevent confusion given the Code has been adopted widely nationally. The LGA has also produced guidance about the Code, and it would be more straightforward to use if the council's Code itself was consistent with the national one.

6. In Worcestershire, the LGA Code with the local additions has been adopted by all the District Councils, with the exception of:

Redditch Borough – adopted the LGA Code with local additions and minor specific amendments

Wyre Forest – the LGA Code of Conduct without local additions has been agreed for introduction from May 2023.

7. The draft Code is attached as an Appendix. This is the LGA Code including the 'local' amendments, which are highlighted in the document.

8. The Committee is invited to consider the Code and what it wishes to propose to the Council for adoption. It is likely that the Council will consider the Code recommended by the Committee at its meeting on 18 May for immediate adoption.

9. Whilst ideally the County and District councils and the Fire Authority would all use the same Code, the main differences from the LGA Code kept in the 'local' version are:

- Retaining the limit of £15 for gifts and hospitality rather than the £50 suggested in the LGA Code and
- Retaining ten principles of standards in local life rather than the seven in the LGA Code.

10. As there are District Council elections this year, the Monitoring Officers are working to arrange shared training sessions about member conduct in general terms for County and District Councillors and Fire Authority members, both 'face to face' and on-line. This will be an opportunity for a refresh about the Code contents. The sessions will also include hints and tips for members dealing with their obligations in the Code.

Supporting Information

Appendix – Local version of the LGA Model Member Code of Conduct

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report as the documents relied on are already published. These documents are:

The report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: [Local government ethical standards: report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612242/Local-government-ethical-standards-report-2017-18.pdf) .

The Government's response to the report: [Local government ethical standards: government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612242/Local-government-ethical-standards-government-response-to-the-Committee-on-Standards-in-Public-Life-report-2017-18.pdf)

The LGA Model Code of Conduct: [Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/media/1000000/Local-Government-Association-Model-Councillor-Code-of-Conduct-2020.pdf)