

Response of the Standards Committee to the LGA draft Model Code of Conduct Consultation 2020

This response is on behalf of the Standards Committee of Wiltshire Council, following consultation with political group leaders. It has not been possible to canvass the views of all Members of the council, however, group leaders have had the opportunity to make their members aware of the consultation to enable them to respond with more detail of their personal views if appropriate.

The Committee noted that the draft Model Code of Conduct is considerably more detailed than the current Code, and considered that examples of behaviours which might be a breach to clarify the meaning of specific sections was useful if such a detailed Code were to be adopted.

The Committee did not have a consensus view on the desirability of adopting such a detailed Code versus the current light touch model Code, with some members in favour of such an approach and some opposed. However, it did wish to highlight for the purposes of the consultation a number of elements to the draft Model Code which needed to be very carefully considered or worded if they were to be included in any model Code.

In particular, some though not all members raised concerns over the inclusion of sections on civility and not bringing a council into disrepute. In particular, they queried whether explanatory wording might discourage the submission of trivial complaints during political discourse which, by its very nature, could be robust or involve passionate disagreement, including of an authority's current policies or political direction. However, others considered those sections reasonable inclusions noting that civil debate was generally practiced, and that inaccurate accusations could bring a council into disrepute. There was also debate on the section relating to when the Code would apply, and the descriptions of when someone was deemed to be representing their authority.