

Simpler, clearer code of conduct for local councillors

Communities and Local Government News Release 2007/0087

08 May 2007

A simpler, clearer and more proportionate code of conduct for local councillors in England is now in force.

The new code will remove rules which have stood in the way of councillors acting as advocates for and leaders of their local communities, as proposed in last year's Local Government White Paper.

Local Government Minister Phil Woolas said:

*"This revised code provides a simpler, clearer and more proportionate code of conduct for local councillors. It is important that members and councils are given the right responsibilities and tools in order to be able to manage the conduct of councillors effectively. **It also removes the current barriers to councillors speaking up for their constituents or for the public bodies on which they have been appointed to serve.** The new code is widely supported by local authorities, and the changes will help to maintain public confidence and trust in local government which is necessary if councils are to fulfil their leadership role."*

The revised code is part of the Government's wider vision for a more devolved conduct regime, including more locally-based decision-making with most misconduct allegations being investigated and dealt with at local level.

Notes:

1. The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007, issued on 4 April, promulgates a revised model code of conduct for local authority members. The new model code came into effect on 3 May, following the negative resolution procedure. This code replaces with amendments the four separate codes of conduct issued in 2001 in respect of members of different categories of authorities.
2. The revised code follows consultation with local authorities on proposed amendments which was carried out between 22 January and 9 March. This attracted 906 responses. Consultees generally welcomed the proposals. A number of suggestions made by respondents, including measures to improve the accessibility and user-friendliness of the code and to amend further the rules relating to prejudicial interest and conduct undertaken in a member's private capacity, have been incorporated into the revised code. The provisions of the revised model code will apply to members of local authorities in England, following each authorities' adoption of the new code. In the case of those authorities which do not adopt the code, the Local Government Act 2000 provides that the provisions of the revised code will automatically apply in respect of members of those authorities.
3. The Local Government White Paper, 'Strong and Prosperous Communities', issued in October 2006, indicated the Government's intention to introduce a revised code of conduct for members which would be simpler, clearer and more proportionate. This revised code fulfils this promise.
4. Copies of the order, which came into effect on 3 May 2007, to coincide with the next round of local government elections, have been placed in the libraries of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and circulated to local authorities and other stakeholders.