

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Standards and Ethics Committee – 12 June 2025

Report Title

Standards and Ethics Committee - Civility in Public Life

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

N/A

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

A report setting out the objectives of and the resources available to members through the LGA's Civility in Public Life campaign.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee notes the content of the report.
2. That the Committee requests that the Monitoring Officer circulate to Borough members a summary of the resources available as set out in this report via the Members newsletter and provide the same information to local councils via clerks.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Standards and Ethics Committee - Consideration of Complaints

1. Background

- 1.1 With reference to one of the other reports on the Agenda at today's meeting, namely the report concerning the review of the Code of Conduct, the LGA's Civility in Public Life (CPL) campaign started at the time of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report into Ethical Standards in Local Government. As stated in that report, one of the main focuses initially for the campaign was to provide a Model Code of Conduct, in response to one of the recommendations of the CSPL report.
- 1.2 However, the CPL campaign went further than that and as stated on the CPL website, the objectives for the LGA in embarking the programme of work was as follows:
 - to articulate what local government believes are good standards for anyone engaging in public and political discourse and debate, and what is needed to achieve these standards
 - to show leadership at a local, national, UK-wide and international level in good standards of political debate, engagement and decision-making, demonstrating the positive impact it can have
 - to understand the scale and impact of intimidation and abuse behaviour our membership is experiencing

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Bearing in mind the type and nature of the complaints received by the Council, as set out in the Consideration of Complaints report before the Committee today, it was felt timely and appropriate to provide a reminder to members of this Committee, as to the ambit and content of the Civility in Public Life (CPL) campaign and the resources available therein. Further as set out in the recommendations of this report, it is proposed that Borough members and local council members are provided with a summary of the resources available through the CPL, to assist them in their role as councillor, in particular around standards and conduct.
- 2.2 As referred to above the CPL campaign started at the time of the CSPL report and in August 2020, the elected leaders of the UK's local government associations - COSLA, LGA, NILGA and WLGA - agreed a joint statement in support of the Civility in Public Life Programme, as follows:

The intimidation and abuse of Councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; it can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, prevent individuals from standing for election and undermine public trust in democratic processes.

These harmful behaviours, whether occurring towards, between or by elected members are entirely unacceptable.

Across our four nations COSLA, LGA, NILGA and WLGA commit to promoting Civility in Public Life, positive debate and resultantly supporting the wellbeing of our elected members

- 2.3 A wider summary the aims and objectives of the Programme are as follows:

Defining Good Standards:

The campaign aims to clearly define and promote what constitutes good conduct in public office, encompassing both members and employees.

Leadership and Example:

The LGA emphasizes the importance of leadership through actions and words, showcasing the benefits of civil and respectful engagement.

Addressing Intimidation and Abuse:

The campaign acknowledges the negative impact of intimidation and abusive behaviour on public life and aims to address these issues.

Promoting Positive Debate:

The goal of the campaign is to create a culture where respectful debate and decision-making are encouraged, leading to positive outcomes for communities.

Supporting Councillors and Elected Representatives:

The LGA offers support to elected members in addressing abuse, helping to ensure their safety and wellbeing, and promoting their ability to represent the public effectively.

Civility in Online Spaces:

The campaign also addresses the importance of civil behaviour in online interactions, recognizing the growing influence of digital platforms in public discourse.

- 2.4 This report focuses on the standards and conduct elements and resources available through the CPL. A report about the other elements of the campaign including the Debate Not Hate campaign will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 2.5 The CLP recognised that the primary means for maintaining standards of conduct and behaviour is the Member Code of Conduct therefore as well as carrying out the extensive consultation exercise in respect of drafting the Model Code of Conduct, and then drafting the same, the LGA has issued extensive support material in addition to the Model Code of Conduct. These include guidance for members on the operation of the Model Code of Conduct, guidance on complaints handling under the Model Code of Conduct and an extensive training resources pack which is adaptable for use by different councils. These resources are available on the following link: [Councillor conduct and standards | Local Government Association](#)

- 2.6 The CPL also provides social media guidance for members, a series of written and video guides to support members in using social media. These include a guide to the role of members on social media, a guide to tackling online abuse, and a guide to creating accessible social media content as well as other platform specific guides. These resources provide guidance to help members comply with the Code of Conduct when engaging with social media. These resources are available on the following link: [Social media guidance for councillors | Local Government Association](#)
- 2.7 Also as part of its work programme the CPL has developed a members workbook on facilitation and conflict resolution which sets out advice and tips for members. This may be a useful resource to be accessed by members generally but also by some of the local councils where there are reports of conflict in and outside of meetings. The workbook is available on the following link: [A councillor's workbook on facilitation and conflict resolution: setting out useful advice and tips for councillors | Local Government Association](#)
- 2.8 Further the CPL provides guidance around handling abuse and intimidation which includes a Councillors guide to handling harassment, abuse and intimidation, a guide for councillors and candidates around principles for safer canvassing and support and resources for councillors around Digital citizenship. This resource is available on the following link: [Handling abuse and intimidation | Local Government Association](#) As stated above, further information in relation to this issue will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee, in particular around that part of the CPL campaign known as Debate not Hate.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 The only other option to the recommendations is that the material provided through the CPL it is not referred to members and local councils. This would not be recommended as it would miss the opportunity to provide members and local councils with further information relating in particular to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 N/A

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

N/A

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The officer time in dealing with this issue is met within existing Legal Services resources.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Council and the Standards and Ethics Committee have a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. The circulation of the materials referred to within this report as recommended, will contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

None

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

None

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

None

11. Implications for Partners

None

12. Risks and Mitigation

None

13. Accountable Officer(s)

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