
Compact between the [County] Association of Local Councils, the [Branch] Society of Local Council Clerks and [Principal authority], [Principal authority], and [Principal authority].

Note: this template is provided as a guide only. All sections - principles of partnership working, objectives, current concerns, possible ways to address concerns and partner undertaking – should be amended to reflect local circumstances.

1) PART A

1.1) Preamble

This compact is a partnership agreement between the [County] Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks (with particular reference to the [insert name] Branch) and the [principal authority], [principal authority] and [principal authority] working through their Standards Committees ('the Partners'). It sets out some key principles and commitments for the Partners to work together to improve their relationships for the benefit of the parish and town councils, and thereby, the communities of the parishes and towns they aim to serve.

1.2) The Principles of the Compact

All partners will

- be responsive to the needs of parish councillors and clerks
- recognise each other's contributions
- acknowledge constraints on each other's resources and contributions, as well as the responsibilities and accountability of partners
- encourage joint working between partners, and with parish and town councillors and clerks

1.3) The Compact requires

- understanding of the Partners' respective roles
- sharing information subject to duties of confidentiality
- recognition of the diversity (in terms of functions discharged as well as size) and contribution of parish councils

- provision of support, guidance and advice for parish councillors and clerks
- regular and effective communication
- commitment to delivering the objectives of the compact

1.4) Objectives of the Compact

The key objectives of the compact are to:-

- 1) Gain improvements in parish and town councillors' awareness, understanding and observance of the statutory Code of Conduct
- 2) Prevent relationship breakdowns which may result in dysfunctional parish or town councils, undermining their democratic mandate.
- 3) Improve community leadership and action at parish and town council level.
- 4) Establish where there is good practice to inform future work.

1.5) Current Concerns

The Partners to the compact identified some common concerns. These were:-

- Many (particularly smaller) parish and town councils only consider the implications of the Code of Conduct when an issue arises about which the parishioners/councillors become divided.
- There is often confusion about the application of the Code of Conduct for councillors and the rules governing meetings and council business.
- Parish clerks sometimes take the view that as the Code of Conduct is for members, training in it is not a priority for them.
- When Code of Conduct training is offered it is often the same parish and town councils who attend; those who do not show interest in or attend such training are perhaps the most in need.
- There is a general lack of understanding and engagement between Standards Committees and parish and town councils.
- Opportunities for engagement presented to parish and town councils by partners are limited by resources.
- On a county-wide basis there was scope for a closer relationship between the Society of Local Council Clerks, the [County] Association of Local Councils and the Standards Committees of principal authorities in the area.

1.6) Possible ways to address concerns

The Partners to the compact considered the following in addition to the existing practices and procedures:-

- Raising the profile of Standards Committees with parish and town councils, the [County] Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks, through information sharing and joint training
- Use of standards committee members to advise/mentor parish and town councillors in respect of the application of the Code of Conduct as appropriate
- Developing an information sheet on the work of the local standards committees. This could be included in the County Association's Induction pack for new parish and town councillors
- Inviting independent chairs of standards committees to attend seminars of parish/town council councillors or chairs to inform/discuss matters of mutual interest
- The [County] Association of Local Councils' Chief Executive attending the meeting of [County] forum of independent members of standards committees
- Formalising and tailoring the input on Code of Conduct and ethical governance into existing and new training events and developing joint delivery of that input for councillors and clerks

2) PART B – Agreement

2.1) Partner Undertakings

2.1.1) The [County] Association of Local Councils undertakes to:-

- consult with all other Partners to the compact in preparing, revising and delivery of any training related to the Code of Conduct or ethical council governance to be delivered to councillors or clerks on behalf of the County Training Partnership;
- promote the importance of observance of the Code of Conduct and ethical behaviour for good governance of Parish and Town Councils;
- provide two ‘new councillor induction training’ events per year and an induction pack for new councillors;
- provide two ‘new clerk induction training’ events per year and an induction pack for new clerks;
- provide at least one event for established parish council clerks in relation to the Code of Conduct and good governance per year;
- provide at least one event for parish council chairs in relation to the Code of Conduct and good governance per year;
- mandate the [County] Association of Local Councils’ Chief Executive to attend (on invitation) the meeting of the [County] forum of independent members of standard committees and meetings of the [County] Monitoring Officers Group;
- contribute to the development and production an information sheet on the work of the local standards committees for councillors and clerks;
- to collate, keep and update a record of all councillors of parish and town councils in their membership who have attended any training event relating to the Code of Conduct.

2.1.2) The [principal authority], [principal authority] and [principal authority] undertake to:-

- maintain at least [number] parish council representatives on each standards committee to facilitate representation in relation to (i) the assessment (ii) the review of a decision not to refer a matter for investigation (iii) the determination of a matter referred for investigation;
- develop an information sheet on the work of the local standards committees;
- consult with all other Partners in preparing, revising or delivering any training related to the Code of Conduct or ethical council governance to be delivered to parish and town councillors or clerks in liaison with the County Training Partnership;
- liaise with the County Association of Local Councils and the local branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks and County Training Partnership when organising training for members of standards committees
- request the independent members and Monitoring Officers to invite the County Association of Local Council's Chief Executive to attend meetings of the County forum of independent members of standards committees and meetings of the County Monitoring Officers Group respectively;
- keep the Chief Executive of the County Association of Local Councils informed of all standards committee meeting dates in advance and advise as to the publication of all agendas for meetings open to the public;
- provide the resource of a standards committee member or Monitoring Officer to participate in the councillor and clerk training events being provided by the County Training Partnership via County Association of Local Councils;
- provide the resource of a standards committee member to participate in Parish Council events provided by the County Training Partnership via the County Association of Local Councils;
- mandate their Monitoring Officer to attend an appropriate district area meeting of the County Association of Local Councils and a meeting of the local branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks;

- approach the County Association of Local Councils when recruiting for the parish council member(s) of their standards committee;
- encourage all independent members to attend and observe a parish council meeting to better understand the operation of parish councils and the types of issues which arise;

2.1.3) The Society of Local Council Clerks undertakes to:-

- consult with all other Partners in preparing, revising and delivering any training related to the Code of Conduct or ethical council governance to be delivered to councillors or clerks in liaison with the County Training Partnership;
- provide the resource of an SLCC member to participate in the councillor and clerk training events being provided by the county training partnership via the [County] Association of Local Councils;
- assist and support the [County] Association and the principal authority in promoting an information sheet on the work of the local standards committees.
- arrange for the Monitoring Officers to attend an appropriate meeting of the local branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks;
- provide for mentoring of clerks where this need is identified.

2.1.4) Joint activities – Partners undertake to:-

- meet on a [twice yearly] basis to discuss identified benefits from and difficulties in, implementation of the compact;
- agree the format and content of a workshop / seminar involving all partners to be offered to parish councils and to deliver it;
- review the mechanics and outcomes of the compact annually

3) PART C – SIGNATURES

By signing below, the parties agree their participation in and accept their responsibilities under this compact.

Signed on behalf of [**principal authority**]

.....

Name **Role / Title**

Date

Signed on behalf of [**principal authority**]

.....

Name **Role / Title**

Date

Signed on behalf of [**principal authority**]

.....

Name **Role / Title**

Date

Signed on behalf of the local branch of Society of Local Council Clerks

.....

Name **Role / Title**

Date

Signed on behalf of the [**County**] Association of Local Councils

.....

Name **Role / Title**

Date