

Dear Sirs,

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Lewisham Council Standards Committee.

This Committee has reviewed the draft LGA Model Member Code of Conduct. We have wholeheartedly welcomed the review and the opportunity to provide input into the consultation.

We respectfully ask the LGA to note our comments and observations.

This Committee generally endorses the recommendations of the LGA; but, with a number of caveats. I have reproduced the pertinent comments below using relevant headings from the draft model code:-

‘Presumption of acting in an official capacity.’

- We note this recommendation would require legislative change.
- Greater clarification is required
- The use of social media in particular, has made it difficult to see clear boundaries between when Councillors are acting as private individuals and when “deemed to be representing ...[their] Council.”
- “This can be a “grey area”
- “If people know you are a Councillor, whether or not you are acting in that capacity, ... people will associate you with the Council. Therefore, a presumption of ‘acting in an official capacity’ is important for lay people and therefore the potential for bringing the Council into disrepute. People rarely make a distinction.”
- “As a Councillor, I am uncomfortable that everything we do is deemed to be as a Councillor and so [this] would require further clarification...Across the Country, there is no clear conclusion on this.”
- “As a Councillor, we are under scrutiny and that includes our private life as well.”
- “Social media does mean we need to be alert to the dangers of social media and the need to have special attention given to it.”

‘Disclosable Pecuniary Interests’

- We note the specific recommendation would require legislative amendment.
- “generally support disclosure of interests”.

‘Gifts and hospitality’

- “perhaps add an annual review of the limit of £25 from a single source”.
- “The cumulative figure from a single source of £100 would be a good idea.”

‘Sanctions’.

- “Withdrawal of facilities is a problem if they are then unable to fulfil their role to support residents on casework.”
- “Not happy that there is no right of appeal”.

‘Civility’

- “it is more important to have ‘respect’. You can be polite and civil but be disrespectful in general attitude.”

General observations upon the draft Model Code:-

- “The draft model code from the LGA is largely endorsed and welcomed”
- “It is disappointing as a draft ...it needs more framing of the context in which Councillors are acting, in the public interest and the public responsibility. It does not reflect the Nolan principles in the Code.”
- “The context in which Councillors are acting is very important and the Code is not proactive on ethical standards. It was negative in tone, over emphasized the negatives, rather than being proactive... reasons for having the Code are not strong enough”.

Finally, on behalf of my Committee, we thank you for this opportunity and await to see the outcome.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr. Obajimi Adefiranye
Chair Standards Committee
London Borough of Lewisham.