

**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Standards Committee**

**11 September 2020**

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Local Government Association - Draft Model Member Code of Conduct</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>Councillor Sybil Ralphs - Leader</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Linden Vernon – Senior Officer (Governance and Member Support)</b>
<b>WARDS INVOLVED:</b>	<b>Non-Specific</b>

**Appendices Attached:**

**Appendix A – The current SMDC Code of Conduct**

**Appendix B – LGA Model Member Code of Conduct Consultation Document**

**Appendix C – LGA Model Member Code of Conduct Webinar Presentation**

**1. Reason for the Report**

- 1.1 The report provides members of the Committee with an update with regards to the LGA draft Model Member Code of Conduct.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the report.

**3. Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new standards framework throughout all levels of Local Government in England. This required all authorities to adopt a local Code of Conduct consistent with the seven principles of public life.

- 3.2 In 2018, the Committee for Standards in Public Life undertook a review of local government ethical standards. This found that there was inconsistency between codes of conduct in local authorities. It was therefore recommended that the Local Government Association (LGA) should produce a new national 'model code' which takes into account changes to the political environment, such as the increasing use of social media in public life, with the discretion for individual authorities to adapt the model code to fit local circumstances.

3.3 The LGA have reviewed their previous Model Code and have conducted a consultation exercise. The final version of the Code will be offered as a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments.

#### 4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 The maintenance of high standards of behaviour are fundamental to achieving the Council's priorities.

#### 5. **Alternative Options**

5.1 There are no options to consider at this point.

Mark Trillo

**Executive Director (People) and Monitoring Officer**

#### **Web Links and**

#### **Background Papers**

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| ▪ Appendix A – The current HPBC Code of Conduct                       | Linden Vernon  |
| ▪ Appendix B – LGA Model Member Code of Conduct Consultation Document | Senior Officer (Governance and Member Support)   |
| ▪ Appendix C – LGA Model Member Code of Conduct Webinar Presentation  | <a href="mailto:linden.vernon@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk">linden.vernon@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk</a> |

#### **Contact details**

#### 6. **Detail**

6.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new standards framework throughout all levels of Local Government in England. Section 28 of the Act required all authorities to adopt a local Code of Conduct consistent with the seven principles of public life which replaced the previous national statutory code. The Council's latest Code is attached at Appendix A.

6.2 In 2018, the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CPSL - an independent public body which advises government on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK) undertook a review of local government ethical standards. The CPSL considers that robust standards arrangements are needed to safeguard local democracy, maintain high standards of conduct, and to protect ethical practice in local government.

6.3 The Committee's report was published on 30 January 2019 and included 26 recommendations and 8 best practice recommendations. These were reported to this Committee on 22 March and 19 July 2019. This led to a review of the Council's own Code (approved by Council on 16 October 2019) and amendments were made with regards to prohibitions on bullying and harassment, requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors.

6.4 Although the CSPL's report did not recommend a return to the previous

centralised system overseen by Standards for England, it did find that there was inconsistency between codes of conduct in local authorities. It was therefore recommended that the Local Government Association (LGA) should produce a new national model code which takes into account changes to the political environment, such as the increasing use of social media in public life, with the discretion for individual authorities to adapt the model code to fit local circumstances.

- 6.5 The LGA have reviewed their previous Model Code and have conducted a consultation exercise on this which ended on 17 August. All members of the Council were invited to respond to the consultation document (Appendix B) and take part in one of three webinars organised by the LGA (the presentation is attached at Appendix C). This Model Member Code of Conduct has been developed in consultation with the sector and, when finalised, will be offered as a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments. The LGA will undertake an annual review of the Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, particularly with respect to advances in technology, social media and any relevant changes in legislation.
- 6.6 A further report will be presented to this Committee following the publication of the final version of the LGA Model Code.