



Report to Policy & Resources Committee on

The Civility and Respect Project

20th June 2022

Background

This report is to highlight the work being carried out by a collaboration of NALC, OVW, SLCC and county associations, who came together following growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils.

The organisations have responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee the Civility and Respect Project

Mission Statement

Civility and Respect Working Group's Mission Statement is:

Civility and respect should be at the heart of public life and good governance is fundamental to ensuring an effective and well-functioning democracy at all levels.

The intimidation, abuse, bullying and harassment of councillors, clerks and council staff, in person or online, is unacceptable, whether by councillors, clerks, council staff, or public members.

This can prevent councils from functioning effectively, councillors from representing local people, discourage people from getting involved, including standing for election, and undermine public confidence and trust in local democracy.

NALC, county associations and OVW, as the membership organisations representing the first tier of local government in England and Wales, and the SLCC, as the professional body for clerks, are committed to working together to promote civility and respect in public life, good governance, positive debate and supporting the well-being of councillors, professional officers and staff.

To that end, the Civility and Respect Working Group will be working to deliver tangible resources, actions and interventions in four main areas: providing councils with the tools to support good governance; lobbying to strengthen the standards regime and encouraging more people to get involved; training; and processes to intervene to provide support to struggling councils.

Code of Conduct

One of the critical issues already identified by the project was that the Code of Conduct produced by the Local Government Association (LGA) in 2021 had not been widely adopted. The Civility and Respect project had endorsed the LGA model

Code of Conduct and the guidance notes aimed to help understanding and consistency of approach towards the code.

The code is a template for councils to adopt in whole and or with amendments to take into account local circumstances.

The code and guidance have been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct, and safeguard the public's trust and confidence in the role of councillor in local government.



Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- The Town Council adopts the Bullying and Harassment Statement Poster and shares it on the website and social media.
- Reviews the Code of Conduct, makes any necessary amendments and approves for adoption by the Town Council.
- Reviews the Media Policy and Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy with the Civility and Respect Project in mind.
- Notes Appendix A and how the Civility and Respect 'continuum' illustrates how issues can escalate over time.

Louise Bareham
Town Clerk
15th June 2022

Appendix A

