

**Cheltenham Borough Council**  
**Standards Committee**  
**4<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

**Report of Interim Monitoring Officer**  
**A unified Code of Conduct**

<b>Report Summary</b>	This report informs the Committee of a proposal to introduce a unified Code of Conduct for all Councils within Gloucestershire
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>The Committee is asked to note the report and</b>  <b>1. consider the proposed Code and if appropriate</b>  <b>2. support a recommendation for its adoption by the Council</b>

**Introduction**

1. In 2019, a national review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) noted a wide disparity in the style and content of local Codes of Conduct and recommended that the LGA develop a Model Code of Conduct that Councils could choose to adopt and/or adapt to suit their circumstances. The LGA accepted this recommendation, and completed work on a Model Code of Conduct in December 2020, which has since been modified to correct a number of minor anomalies. The current version of the LGA Code is available on the LGA website at <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct-2020>.
2. It is the case that, despite the LGA model, many Councils operate a Code of Conduct which does not wholly conform to the model Code. This could be for a number of different and local reasons and, in Gloucestershire, there are different Codes in use in the individual Councils. As a result of this some consideration has been given to the prospect of adopting a unified Code for all the Councils and Parish Councils within the Gloucestershire group or ensuring they are strongly aligned as to content and requirements.

## Development of a Gloucestershire Code of Conduct for Councillors

3. The group of Monitoring Officers for the Gloucestershire Councils have been involved in discussing and drafting a proposed Code taking into account the LGA model and their experiences of operating the present Codes in the individual Councils and have reached a point where the Monitoring Officers of all 7 councils are happy to recommend to their authorities the present draft as the basis for further consultation and consideration. This present draft is attached to this report.
4. It is important to note the realities existing as regards the present situation amongst the Gloucestershire group. Some Councils had already adopted the LGA model code in its entirety whilst others were happy with their existing code and had no plans to change it. However, the potential benefits of having a shared code have created a strong case for convergence and alignment into a Code which, subject to a few minor local variations, is both uniform and consistent.
5. These potential benefits have been strengthened by the involvement of Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) in the monitoring officer group discussions. While individual parishes are under no obligation to adopt a common Gloucestershire Code, GAPTC is extremely supportive of them doing so, as it will enable them to provide better advice, support and training.
6. While the content of the draft Code is fully consistent with that of the LGA model code, its style and layout is different. As part of the process of moving towards a standard model it has been recognised that some aspects of the LGA code would not have gained support in the individual Councils. However it can be said that while the precise wording may be different, the standards described in the draft Gloucestershire Code are the same as those in the LGA Model Code, meaning that Gloucestershire Councils can still benefit from the training that the LGA offers on Code of Conduct issues.
7. There will, inevitably, be some minor differences between the codes adopted by each of the Councils examples of which include:-
  - Since Stroud District Council has adopted the committee system of governance, the sections on executive decision making will not feature in their version
  - District versions of the Code will include additional advice for Parish and Town Councils, in the expectation that it will also be adopted by many of them. It is not necessary to include that in the County version, given that it has no direct responsibility for standards issues involving parish councillors.
  - There may also be some ancillary differences over such issues as the value over which gifts and hospitality must be declared.
8. Nevertheless, in all other respects, it is intended that the wording of the Codes of the seven Gloucestershire principal councils should be identical.

## **Next steps**

9. It is proposed that the draft Code of Conduct is now used as the basis for each Council to consider whether it meets their requirements recognising each Council will determine how best to proceed. In the case of Cheltenham this report proposes that the Standards Committee receives and comments on the draft Code and considers it for further recommendation to the Councils Constitutional Working Group which next meets in early September. Subject to these considerations the Code could either be further reviewed by the monitoring officer group or sent forward for ratification by the Council.