



Adoption of the
new model code
of conduct in
town and parish
councils

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Why should councils adopt the LGA model code?

- SALC were approached by the Somerset Monitoring Officers Group in February 2022 to help promote the adoption of the new LGA model code of conduct
 - Having all councils across the three tiers using the same code should help to provide clearer interpretation, training and guidance
 - The new code is much clearer when it comes to defining what constitutes appropriate member behaviour
 - Previously around two thirds of councils were using the NALC (National Association of Local Councils) model code, with the other third adopting the Somerset Monitoring Officers code for the district and county councils
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Where are we now?

- SALC has recently undertaken a short survey of its members to ascertain the current position
 - 163 councils responded (around 60% of all local councils in Somerset)
 - 82.2% have adopted the LGA model
 - 8% are still using the old NALC model
 - 5.5% are still using the old MO code (former district/county code)
 - 4.3% are using an "other" model
 - 11 of the 29 councils not currently using the LGA model intend to adopt it
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Positives of the new model

- Recognition that it will be easier to provide training and interpretative guidance on the code (NALC has commissioned some guidance due by the end of the year as part of its Civility and Respect project - [Civility and Respect Project \(nalc.gov.uk\)](http://nalc.gov.uk))
 - Acknowledgement that the new unitary Monitoring Officer will have a challenging job
 - Clerks appreciate the clear definitions of respectful behaviour, what constitutes bullying and harassment and the additional information on other obligations
 - We have seen more councillors attend our code training sessions (up 300% on last year)
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But there are still some challenges

- There is a broad perception within the sector that the current sanctions regime is not fit for purpose – government is still dragging its heels on implementing recommendations from the Committee for Standards in Public Life
 - Some councils feel that complaints are not always treated seriously and are too easily dismissed
 - There are still behavioural issues within local councils – although recently, we have seen an increase in councils having to deal with challenging behaviour from members of the public
 - How do we persuade councils still using the older models to adopt the LGA code?
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Looking to the future

- Will the new Somerset Council have the resources to provide a robust standards regime?
 - As sanctions are in the hands of the government, can we explore different approaches to managing conflict within councils - could Somerset Council provide access to some form of mediation service and also open up its HR expertise to local councils?
 - Training remains crucial - not just on the code itself but on related matters such as roles and responsibilities and basic employment law. We are keen to work with the new unitary MO to expand the current offer
 - SALC will continue to engage with NALC and our membership on the Civility and Respect Project and encourage councils to sign the Civility and Respect pledge
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