

**North East Derbyshire District Council**

**Standards Committee**

**6th December 2022**

**Civility and Respect Pledge for Parish and Town Councils**

**Report of the Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer**

**Classification:** This report is public

**Report By:** Sarah Sternberg, the Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

**Contact Officer:** Sarah Sternberg, the Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

**PURPOSE / SUMMARY**

Local Councils have something of a reputation for bad behaviour and bullying behaviour. In response to this NALC (National Association of Local Councils) and SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) have produced the Civility and Respect pledge for Parish and Town Councils. This report is to seek support for promoting this both with current Local Councils and with the new Local Councils following the elections in May 2023.

In addition and as part of the Civility and Respect project work stream, NALC and SLCC have produced guidance for Town and Parish Councils on the use of social media responsibly and as a local councillor. The report is similarly seeking support to promote this with current Local Councils and the new Local Councils following the elections in May 2023.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Chair and Monitoring Officer write to all Local Councils encouraging them to take the Civility and Respect pledge.
2. That the Chair and Monitoring Officer write to all Local Councils encouraging them to introduce social media guidance for councillors based on the Civility and Respect Guidance.
3. That this is repeated following the May 23 elections.

**IMPLICATIONS**

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**Finance and Risk:** Yes  No

**Details:**

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Legal (including Data Protection):**

Yes

No

**Details:**

As in the report

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

**Staffing:**

Yes

No

**Details:**

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

## DECISION INFORMATION

Decision Information	
<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:  <b>NEDDC:</b> <b>Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
<b>District Wards Significantly Affected</b>	None directly
<b>Consultation:</b> <b>Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Cabinet <input type="checkbox"/></b> <b>SMT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/></b> <b>Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></b>	Yes  Details: Standards Committee

**Links to Council Plan priorities, including Climate Change, Equalities, and Economics and Health implications.**

None

## **REPORT DETAILS**

### **1 Background**

- 1.1 The standard of behaviour in Parish and Town Councils is not always high enough. Respect to fellow councillors, clerks and the public can be lacking. There is little that can be done in many cases. Even where Chairs try to control the bad behaviour, it can often continue.
- 1.2 To help Councils address this, NALC and SLCC have introduced the Civility and Respect Project.

### **2. Details of Proposal or Information**

- 2.1 The first part of the project is the Civility and Respect Pledge whereby Councils pledge to tackle disrespectful, bullying and harassing behaviour. The pledge is wider than this and includes training and signing up to the Code of Conduct. The pledge is on page 1 of Appendix 1. This includes further details of the pledge including an agenda item for Councils. This can be found on the NALC website under the "our work" heading.
- 2.4 Appendix 2 contains posters which are freely available to Local Councils in respect of the pledge and bullying and harassment.
- 2.5 This is very helpful advice in terms of behaviour guidance and its relationship to good governance and the effectiveness of Local Councils.
- 2.6 It would be good to promote this with the Local Councils in the District's area, both before and after the May 2023 elections.
- 2.7 At Appendix 3 is the guidance produced under the Civility and Respect agenda for the use of social media by councillors. It also contains some very useful advice to all users of social media. Again I would like to promote this with the Parish and Town Councils in the District's area.
- 2.8 The District has had guidance for some time and this is in the Council's Constitution.

### **3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 It is the role of this Committee and the Monitoring Officer to give advice and guidance where appropriate on behaviour. This is certainly requested at times by the Local Councils.

### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 Not to do anything. This would not highlight to Local Councils action they can take to prevent or deal with inappropriate behaviour. Therefore it was rejected.

## DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title
1	Civility and Respect Pledge
2	Civility and Respect Poster and Bullying and Harassment Statement poster
3	Actively addressing the issues of Civility and Respect on Social Media.
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet you must provide copies of the background papers)	