



Directorate of Transformation and Resources

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To All Town/Parish Councils in West Lancashire

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re: National Review of Ethical Standards  
Consultation on standards complaints submitted by parish/town clerks**

As you may be aware, in 2019 the Committee on Standards in Public Life published its report on local government ethical standards.

The report looks at the current framework governing the behaviour of local government councillors in England and makes a number of recommendations to promote and maintain the standards expected by the public. A link to the report can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-ethical-standards-report>

Chapter 5 of the report deals with the findings and recommendations with regard to Town and Parish Councils.

The report suggests that within a national context difficulties persist in resolving standards matters where clerks are not well supported by the parish council to formally make and resolve complaints, or to prevent behaviour from recurring. The report recommends that Town and Parish councils should take corporate responsibility when allegations of a councillor bullying an employee are received. The report recommends, where behaviour that is in breach of a code is observed by councillors or reported by a clerk, the parish council should lodge a formal standards complaint corporately or in the name of the chair. It is recommended that a clerk should not have to do so themselves. The Committee consider that in addition to providing necessary support to the clerk in such circumstances, such

measures signify to individual councillors that disruptive behaviour is not ignored or accepted by the council generally.

With this in mind the Committee on Standards in Public Life makes the following best practice recommendation:

**Best practice 11: Formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk should be made by the chair or by the parish council as a whole, rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances.**

The Standards Committee at West Lancashire Borough Council have undertaken to consult Parish/Town Councils on their views with regard to the above best practice recommendation before considering whether any amendments to its existing complaint procedures are necessary.

If your Town/Parish Council has any comments to make please provide these via email to Kirsty Breakell, Member Services/Civic Officer at [kirsty.breakell@westlancs.gov.uk](mailto:kirsty.breakell@westlancs.gov.uk)

It would be appreciated if all responses are submitted by the 30 November 2020.

Yours faithfully

*M. E. Jones*

**Matt Jones**  
**Legal & Democratic Services Manager**