

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

27th January 2009

OPEN	
Responsible Officer	Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer	C S Newlands Ext. 2715
Appendices	Appendix 1 Consultation Questions <i>The consultation paper has been sent to members electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details)</i>

Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity : A Consultation

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To consider a consultation paper from the Department of Communities and Local Government entitled Communities in Control : Real People, Real Power – Code of recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity : A Consultation.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **DECIDE:**

To delegate to the Monitoring Officer authority to respond to the consultation on behalf of the Authority the view of the Ethics and Standards Committee

3. Background

- 3.1. The White Paper 'Communities in Control' committed the Government to consulting on potential changes to the Publicity Code. The last Government consultation on the Publicity Code was held in January 2007. This revealed support for the Publicity code as a useful source of advice for authorities on sensitive issues on the use of resources.
- 3.2. Following that consultation the Councillors Commission received views that the Publicity Code may have been seen as a hindrance to councils promoting the role of the Councillor. This consultation paper therefore explains the importance of local authority publicity, sought confirmation of the results of the earlier consultation in January 2007 and sought to establish the views of the Publicity Code across the local government sector. This consultation also seeks to identify how a Publicity Code might function without being perceived as a disincentive to effective communication.

- 3.3. If this consultation reveals that revisions to the Publicity Code are required, then the comments and views received on the consultation document will form the basis for a revised Publicity Code and a consultation on that would take place later in 2009.

4 Key Issues

- 4.1. In the Government's response to the Councillors commission report, published in July 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government acknowledged that there was confusion in local government about how far councils should promote and support Councillors' activities and explained that the Department wanted to clarify this, so that any guidance or advice recognises the legitimate support that should be given to Councillors. In addition the white paper 'Communities in Control', also published in July 2008 recognised that there was confusion within local government about how far local authorities should promote and support Councillors' activities, and, in this context, recognised the need to review the Publicity Code.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The financial implications of responding to the consultation can be met through existing budgets.

6. Legal And Policy Implications

- 6.1. The Ethics and Standards Committee, in its Terms of Reference is required to recommend approval and adoption of relevant plans and policies.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The Government is keen to promote democracy and the role of Councillors. Part of the role of the Ethics and Standards Committee is to recommend approval and adoption of relevant plans and policies it is therefore pertinent for the Committee to respond to the consultation. The Government also wishes to encourage the use of more types of media. Therefore local authority publicity has a key role to play in delivering a positive media profile of the work of Councillors. Councillors should be role models for their communities as being a role model means being visible and publicity can aid that visibility.

8. Consultees

- 8.1. Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Ethics and Standards Committee.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1. Government White Paper – Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power.