

CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLIANCE DATA FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

1. For a number of years the committee has written to Town and Community Councils in the County seeking information regarding the number of declarations of interest made by their members and the extent to which their members have received Code of Conduct training during the preceding 12 months.
2. Whilst most councils do respond to this information request, it usually takes several months (and multiple reminders) for it to be received. A small number of councils do not respond every year.
3. The information received, coupled with publicly available data regarding code of conduct complaints (taken from the Ombudsman's annual report) and dispensation requests (taken from the committee's own minutes) forms the basis of an annual report to the committee, usually in December.
4. Throughout the years there has been no obvious correlation between the various data sets. Some councils have experienced periods of relatively high numbers of complaints, but this has generally been short term. Most councils have not had any code complaints at all. Some councils generate large numbers of declarations of interest every year, others have none. It is impossible for the committee to tell whether there are occasions where declarations should have been made but were not.
5. So far, the committee has simply noted the reported data and has not really utilised it to inform its future work
6. It is suggested therefore that prior to sending the data request to Councils for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 the committee review its approach and consider whether any changes to be made to the data that is collected and how it is obtained. This exercise can then be used to explain to Councils why the data is required (if the committee wishes to continue with the exercise).
7. The committee is therefore asked to consider the following
 - (a) What is the purpose of requesting information from councils about code training and declarations of interest?
 - (b) What use has the committee made of this information?
 - (c) How has this information helped the committee perform its functions?
 - (d) What other information (if any) should the committee seek as well as or instead of that currently obtained?
 - (e) Is there any way the committee can make better use of the information it receives?
8. If the committee decides to continue with this exercise, it may wish to (a) include a more detailed explanation for doing so in the information request letter and (b) include a section in this summer's training event on the subject.