

CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT



IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

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Take the
pledge



WELCOME TO
THE CIVILITY
AND RESPECT
PROJECT
NEWSLETTER

LATEST NEWS ON IMPROVING STANDARDS FROM JONATHAN OWEN, CEO, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC), AND ROB SMITH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS (SLCC)

In a [speech](#) celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, its new chair, Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE, stressed the Nolan Principles (honesty, integrity, objectivity, accountability, selflessness, openness and leadership) and their continued relevance and inspirational nature. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has also included the principles in the new [Ministerial Code](#).

[The government has launched a consultation](#), which runs until 26 February 2025, on proposals to introduce measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime for local authorities in England. There are also intentions to remove the requirement for councillors' addresses to be published, to help combat harassment.

NALC and SLCC have welcomed these announcements and will be responding to the relevant consultations. Councils, councillors and clerks are encouraged to make their own response to the consultations.

The IDB Intervention Taskforce

The taskforce submitted an excellent report to the Improvement and Development Board (IDB) (informed by their personal experience of interventions in the sector where local councils faced chronic failures). The key recommendation to produce a 'Good Practice Guide for Local Councils in Distress' based on the report was approved, with a target to take the final draft of the Guide to the IDB meeting on 6 March 2025.





The Civility and Respect Taskforce

The taskforce has identified three initial priorities:

Peer review

Early ideas on peer review were well received by the taskforce. This would be a process where local councils would review each other against agreed standards, providing constructive feedback on performance, skills, strengths/weaknesses and areas for improvement. Fundamentally a process of prevention rather than cure involving 'a critical friend'. The Board approved a Basic Governance Checklist as a key tool for peer review. The ongoing work is developing a range of templates available to support this and needed to make peer review effective. The taskforce will report on progress to the IDB meeting on 6 March 2025.

Review of Civility and Respect Pledge

1,651 councils have signed up to the Pledge which is an incredible achievement. However, it still means less than 17% of councils have done so.

What the taskforce wants to understand is why 83% of councils have not signed up. A survey is being designed to gather evidence. The goal is to make a step change in the numbers of councils signing up; and to gather evidence of signing The Pledge making a difference and, where this has not happened, identify if, and how, it could be improved.

Work with Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) and others

The aim is to work with others to improve the consistency and quality of responses by monitoring officers to conduct complaints. The clear and early endorsement by the government of its commitment to improving standards in all tiers is welcomed. As is the work being done by LLG. The LLG Vice President, Paul Turner, has met with the taskforce and has asked for evidence of our sector's experiences of working with monitoring officers on conduct complaints.

If you have evidence (that you would like/have the authority to share) please email the Improvement and Development Manager – hazel.broatch@nalc.gov.uk.