



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Further Evidence

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Dear Sir Christopher,

**Committee on Standards in Public Life**

I was grateful to you for the opportunity of sharing some thoughts with the Committee on the 29<sup>th</sup> June and undertaking to write further to you with some examples of good practice from local government.

As you will know, local government does not have a large number of rules in this area, but those that do exist have the advantage of being all-encompassing and with a sense of clarity

These examples include the strict implementation of regulations regarding the following subjects.

Declarations of interest must be made on each and every occasion on which a topic or subject is raised.

In meetings of Planning Committees, for example, it is not allowed for the councillor to have offered a prior opinion on the application under discussion, through the signing of a petition or through a press release. Councillors should retain an open mind on the application until entering the meeting and completing reading of the reports during the meeting.

When a councillor has a non-pecuniary or pecuniary interest, they should declare this interest on each and every occasion and leave the debate, returning only after any discussion on the item has been completed.

The same is true of any potentially conflicting issues that may arise from the councillor's family or personal friends' involvement in subjects under discussion.

Non-compliance with these regulations will often lead to an investigation from local government ombudsman, meaning that these regulations quickly become self-enforcing on the part of individuals and wider political groupings and that a 'better safe than sorry' approach is adopted.

Scrutiny committees, arguably the local government equivalent of Parliamentary Select Committees, include a declaration of whipping from a group, if any such whip is being enforced by a party.

In practice, no such formal whip is declared.

This provides protection for individual members of parties who may wish to give full and frank opinions on wider scrutiny issues without the threat of sanctions for voting against party interests.


This is one way in which power is removed from the hands of the whips and returned to individuals fulfilling their roles as councillors.

Conduct is according to the Nolan Principles and adherence to the seven rules of participation in public life.

In the case of declarations of gifts for local councillors, this includes a lower threshold of donation than currently exists for Members of Parliament, high enough to exclude the un-necessary paperwork and additional concern of receiving small, incidental gifts in everyday life, such as entry to a fete or taking the offer of a cup of coffee, but low enough to catch what many people might see as a significant donation.

I hope that the above will be of some use to the Committee in your deliberations and I look forward to the publication of your report on what is a highly important topic for the maintenance of public faith in our democracy.

Yours sincerely



Elfyn Llwyd MP  
Meirionydd Nant Conwy