



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

The Leader  
Public Law Partnership councils

**Brandon Lewis MP**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

**Department for Communities and Local  
Government**  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 0303 444 3430  
Fax: 0303 444 3986  
E-Mail: [brandon.lewis@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:brandon.lewis@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

19 November 2012

Dear Colleague,

I know that your council has rationalised its legal services through establishing with other authorities a shared service partnership – the Public Law Partnership. This is an excellent example of how service provision can be shared, opening the way to achieving both substantial efficiency gains and improvements in the quality of the service provided.

However, having seen the model code of conduct for members and model arrangements for handling allegations of misconduct which the PLP have developed, I do want to draw to your attention the benefits of your council adopting a lighter touch code than the old Standards Board regime centralist model, and simpler arrangements for handling misconduct allegations than those in that old regime.

Under our new localist approach your council now has wide freedoms to decide its own arrangements for promoting high standards of conduct. This allows you to make a clean break from the bureaucratic arrangements of the old regime which so often led to petty or politically motivated complaints. It is open to your council to put in place simple, fit for purpose arrangements in which all can have confidence. It is important that your new arrangements cannot be seen as some modified continuation of the old discredited regime, but rather a fresh start creating genuine trust and accountability between your council and your local people.

To assist councils to establish these new simpler arrangements we circulated on 11 April an illustrative text for a code of conduct meeting all the requirements of the new regime. Later in June we also wrote to you about simpler arrangements for handling misconduct allegations, and in August we circulated a plain English guide on openness and transparency on personal interests.

It is disappointing therefore to see that your PLP has developed both a code and model arrangements for handling misconduct complaints which would seem to be essentially a modification of the old Standards Board regime material. It is of course for your council to decide what code and arrangements it adopts, and I would expect that you and your members will make clear to your monitoring officer that any heavy, bureaucratic, gold-plated

approach can have no place in the new localist standards arrangements. Accordingly, irrespective of what your council may have previously decided, I would hope that you will be able to adopt a code and arrangements for handling misconduct complaints that will enable your council and its communities fully to realise the benefits of the Localism Act, and which will be perceived by all to be the wholly fresh start so necessary to restore confidence and trust between elected members and their communities. I am placing this letter in the public domain.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brandon Lewis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**BRANDON LEWIS MP**