



HR COMMITTEE (1)

31.05.2022

REPORT ON CIVILITY AND RESPECT EDM

Extract from The Clerk magazine May 2022

Rob's Reflections (SLCC Chief Executive)

"As you'll be aware, the government has released its long anticipated response¹ to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Review of Local Government Ethical Standards (2019). You'll also be aware that it's been met with a collective sigh of disappointment from the sector.

Despite a response acknowledging the large number of requests received for legislative change to strengthen the standards and conduct framework, the government restated its position that recommendations can be more appropriately and effectively taken forward by local authorities - rather than through further legislation.

When the response was released, I wrote to Kemi Badenoch MP, Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to express my disappointment at the government falling short of meeting the recommendations made. I also affirmed SLCC's interest in taking part in discussions around the recommendations the government has committed to take forward and highlighted the work of the civility and respect project. Despite this news, SLCC, along with our partners at the National Association of Local Councils, the county associations, and One Voice Wales continue to invest in this sector-critical area, to support the well-being of colleagues and develop tangible solutions to improve civility and respect.

Members often ask me if there's anything they can do to help with moving this long-term issue forward. Just such an opportunity was presented by Dr Julian Lewis, MP for New Forest East who tabled an early day motion (EDM) calling on the government to establish an appropriate and effective sanctions mechanism to deal with local councillors who have been found guilty of bullying and harassment following an independent investigation. Members can table a council agenda item to pass a resolution for the council to write to their MP asking them to back this motion and have it discussed in Parliament. You can also write to your MP as an individual.

EDMs are an odd and very British concept – ministers are not allowed to sign them, and some MPs choose not to support them out of principle, but they can be effective in drawing attention to specific issues and demonstrating the extent of parliamentary support. In simple terms, the more MPs that support this EDM, the more likely it is to get discussed in Parliament. We have provided template letters for clerks and councils on our website: <https://bit.ly/3r4vt7I>.

My colleagues and I remain committed to progressing civility and respect in the sector, through the workstreams within the project: <https://bit.ly/3tUyYzb>."

Recommendation

To consider sending draft template letter HR1/9 to our local MP to request that the topic of Civility and Respect in Town and Parish Councils is discussed in Parliament.

A Kunaj
Council Manager