



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

**Kris Hopkins MP**  
*Minister for Local Government*

***Department for Communities and Local  
Government***

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Councillor Nigel Ashton  
Leader of North Somerset Council  
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[www.gov.uk/dclg](http://www.gov.uk/dclg)

15<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Dear Councillor Nigel Ashton

**CODE OF PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY**

On 25 March 2014 my officials wrote to the Chief Executives of all principal local authorities, including yours, letting them know how the Secretary of State is minded to exercise his powers, in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, to direct compliance with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority (the 'Publicity Code') that was issued on 31 March 2011. Since then, the Secretary of State has issued written notices of proposed directions to five London Boroughs, and is currently considering the representations he has received in response to those notices. I am now writing to you about your Council's publication, 'North Somerset Life', and its compliance with the provisions of the Publicity Code.

It has been suggested that your Council might not be complying with the Publicity Code. Information available to the Secretary of State indicates that your Council is publishing a local authority newsheet, 'North Somerset Life', every month; copies of the publication appear to be delivered to every household in the Borough. Such a publication would not comply with the provision in the Publicity Code that where local authorities do commission or publish newsletters, newsheets or similar communications, they should not issue them more frequently than quarterly.

As you know, the great majority of local authorities comply with the Publicity Code – the provision in relation to frequency of publication has been designed to ensure that in each locality the independent local media does not face unfair competition. In short, the purpose of that provision is to facilitate the creation of an environment which is as conducive as possible to the flourishing of the independent local media, an essential element of any effectively operating local democracy.

Accordingly, if indeed your Council is issuing its newsheet more frequently than quarterly, I would ask you to now take steps to ensure publication in the future will be in line with the Code's provisions. I would be grateful if you would please let me know within the next ten working days how you intend to proceed. Where the Secretary of State considers that

there is a risk that in future a Council will not be complying with the Code he will be minded to issue, in accordance with the statute, a written notice of a proposed direction.

I am copying this letter to the leader of the Liberal Democrat Group in your local authority.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kris Hopkins', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**KRIS HOPKINS MP**