



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Alison McGovern MP
*Minister of State for Local Government and
Homelessness*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Sent by email to: Council Leaders in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove; West Sussex; Essex, Southend on Sea and Thurrock; Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton; Norfolk; Suffolk

19 November 2025

Dear Leaders,

I am writing to all Leaders of local authorities in England engaged in developing and pursuing local government reorganisation proposals to remind you of the importance I attach to adherence to the [Recommended code of practice for local authority publicity](#) (the Code). This is in response to concerns and queries that have been raised with us about the compliance of some local authority communications which may appear to be advocating one or other favoured reorganisation proposal.

Local authorities must have regard to the Code when producing publicity, defined as “any communication in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or a section of the public”. The Code requires publicity issued by local authorities to adhere to seven principles: lawfulness, cost-effectiveness, objectivity, appropriate use of publicity, have regard to equality and diversity, and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity (i.e. the periods before elections and referendums). These principles matter because they set the standard of what the public have a right to expect with regards to the content of publicly funded communications i.e. that the content is factual, balanced and not being used to unfairly influence opinion.

The Secretary of State has powers, in Section 4A of the Local Government Act 1986, to direct compliance with some, or all, of the Code. I will be looking to you to ensure that all local government reorganisation communications are issued with proper consideration of compliance with the Code. You should take particular care around the principles of objectivity and even-handedness, and the appropriate use of publicity.

I recognise that in many areas there are legitimate debates about the best model for reorganisation, and that feelings may be running high. The government is not trying to stifle that debate, but it is essential that councils have regard for the Code when spending taxpayers’ money on communications.

You should seek the advice of your Monitoring Officer. Monitoring Officers have a statutory role in reporting on matters that they believe are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration.

Yours sincerely,

Alison McGovern

Minister for Local Government and Homelessness