

Business 2

From: Charles Skinner [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 April 2013 10:49
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Response_form_-_Publicity_Code_Consultation (3)
Attachments: Response_form_-_Publicity_Code_Consultation (3).doc

Dear [REDACTED]

Please find attached my response to Mr Pickles' local council publicity code consultation.

Sincerely,

Charles Skinner, FCIPR
[REDACTED]

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16/05/2013

10/10/10

10/10/10

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Response form

Publicity Code Consultation 2013

About you

i) Your details

Name:	Charles Skinner
Position (if applicable)	Reputation Management Consultant & Communications Auditor
Name of Organisation (if applicable)	
Address:	[REDACTED]
e mail:	[REDACTED]
Telephone Number:	[REDACTED]

ii) Are the views expressed on this consultation an official's response from the organisation you represent or your own personal views?

Organisational response

☒

Personal views

☐

iii) Please tick the box which best describes you or your organisation:

District council	
Metropolitan district council	
London borough council	
Unitary authority/county council/county borough council	
Parish council	
Membership organisation	
Newspaper proprietor	
Newspaper staff	
Business	x
Councillor	

Member of the public	
Other	

(please comment):	
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Questions:

1. Views on the proposed legislation are invited, and in particular do consultees see the proposals as fully delivering the commitment to give greater force to the Publicity Code by putting compliance on a statutory basis? A: First I must point out that this consultation is poorly constructed; by using just three quite constrictive questions it clearly seeks to elicit the response that Mr Pickles wants. It is therefore necessary for me to qualify responses as appropriate. For example, obviously putting compliance on a statutory basis will give it greater force, BUT, at the same time this mitigates substantially against the spirit of localism. Whereas I believe that weekly publication of council information publications might be too frequent, the fundamentals of democracy should leave to local electorates and their chosen representatives such decisions.

2. If there is alternative to the power of direction, how will this meet the aim of improved enforcement of the code? A: The existing and long standing requirement for compliance with the code has worked extremely well. This is a fact defined by the tiny number of substantive complaints (as opposed to politically-inspired hyperbole) brought under the code. I am aware of none being upheld. Are you ? To use the heavy handed instrument of statutory footing because the vast majority of citizens and politicians over decades have seen no need or not been bothered to complain under the present arrangements is akin to sacking judges with whom you disagree. The code that covers central government communications is not statutory but if you see fit to make it so for local government, then you should be consistent and apply the same direction there.

3. This consultation invites evidence of the circumstances where the code was not met and the implications of this on competition in local media A: I have no evidence – that is my point. As to any alleged effects on local commercial media, this question of course belies the lobbying by proprietors that has heavily influenced DCLG's stance. It is absurd to suggest that council publications have had any significant negative effect on commercial newspapers. The reasons for the latter's decline include: estate agents switching most of their advertising online; private and commercial car sellers doing the same; radically changing social demographics reducing demand for newspapers that follow a long-outdated model; the overall and continuing switch from printed media to online; under investment by proprietors resulting in high production costs and low staff pay, which often fails to attract the best staff; and proprietors'/editors' slowness to adjust to the reality of 24/7 multi media.

