

Parish 1.

From: Susan Allum [REDACTED]
Sent: 01 May 2013 09:20
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Publicity Code Consultation 2013
Attachments: Response_form_-_Publicity_Code_Consultation.doc
Dear Mark [REDACTED]

Please find attached Uckfield Town Council's response to the Publicity Code Consultation 2013.

Regards

Susan Allum
Civic Centre Manager

Uckfield Town Council
Civic Centre
Uckfield
East Sussex
TN22 1AE

[REDACTED]
www.uckfieldciviccentre.com

www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk

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16/05/2013

Response form

Publicity Code Consultation 2013

About you

i) Your details

Name:	Ashley Serpis
Position (if applicable)	Town Clerk
Name of Organisation (if applicable)	Uckfield Town Council
Address:	Civic Centre, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 1AE
e mail:	Townclerk@uckfieldtc.gov.uk
Telephone Number:	

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	
Councillor	
Member of the public	
Other	x

(please comment):	Town Council
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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?

The suggested legislation appears to be excessive and requiring statutory compliance no longer makes it a Code of Recommended Practice. Nothing is provided to indicate the extent of the perceived issue and no indication is given from where complaints are being received. It is not considered, indeed not known, that this is of such significant importance that it requires such draconian government intervention.

Providing the Secretary of State with powers to make direction, 'whenever he considers it appropriate to do so' and dictate the number of editions of a newsletter a council can produce a year seems to move away from the government's stated aim of encouraging localism. Decisions and remedies are not being made and decided at a local level, but are being decided centrally.

If it is felt that there is a need to give such force to a Code of Recommended Practice as is being suggested then perhaps there is a need to change the Code into legislation.

2. If there is alternative to the power of direction, how will this meet the aim of improved enforcement of the code?

In the case of principal authorities the Local Government Ombudsman could be used to investigate such claims and it is accepted that this would not be relevant to town and parish councils. However, as mentioned there is no evidence given that the practice is rife in town and parish councils which are largely non-political. In addition the number of towns and parishes that publish local newsletters are a small percentage of the total and of those, there is an even smaller percentage that publishes their newsletters more than quarterly.

If it is really felt necessary to give greater force to the Code then there is a need for some balance. The onus should continue to be on the complainant to prove that a law has been broken rather than the Secretary of State being given powers to do so. In addition there is always the opportunity for any resident to make such complaints through the auditing processes.

3. This consultation invites evidence of the circumstances where the code was not met and the implications of this on competition in local media

Uckfield Town Council is not aware of any evidence or circumstances where the Code was not met nor, therefore, the implications on competition in local media. The Town Council has good relations with the local press and it is suggested that this would be the case with most town and parish councils.

There is some concern that the consultation asks for examples of evidence and does not provide any evidence that non-compliance with the Code is a significant issue for the press, but yet seems to be keen to provide the Secretary of State with additional powers to take councils to task over an issue which does not seem to have been proved.

