

President: Sir Edward Greenwell, Bart.

Sent to Section80consultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Stuart Young
Department for Communities and Local Government
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Dear Mr Young

Disqualification Criteria for Councillors and Mayors

This is the response to the above consultation from Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC), the membership organisation for town and parish councils in Suffolk.

SALC supports the proposals to further restrict eligibility to stand for and hold public office. The existing disqualification criteria do not capture the range of matters that cause significant public concern. There are dangers of injustice and in cases where this is proved there should be appropriate remedies. However, we believe that, generally, it would not be considered acceptable for people to stand for or hold office where they are "on the sex offenders register" or have been issued with certain Civil Injunctions and Criminal Behaviour Orders.

Government states that its expectation is that councillors are "community champions" with the "trust of the electorate" given their role making decisions about expenditure of public money. There is no doubt that being a councillor attracts a certain responsibility, status and power and the related ethical requirements should be appropriate. The scope of the consultation is disappointing in being restricted to disqualification criteria. Since changes were made to the ethical standards regime through the Localism Act 2011, there are few sanctions and insufficient clarity about acceptable behaviour. We would urge Government to embark on a thorough and meaningful review of the ethical standards framework.

If you would like to discuss this response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

SS Bendix

Shona Bendix
Chief Executive Officer