

Our Parish Council adopted the Telford and Wrekin Councillor Code of Conduct

The role of councillors across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. It is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. The conduct, as an individual councillor, affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to. We also want individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to be putting themselves forward to become councillors.

As councillors, we represent local residents, work to develop better services and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of the role and entrust Councillors to represent our local area; taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. They have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging any behaviour which falls below expectations.

Importantly, you should be able to undertake the role of councillor without being intimidated, abused, bullied or threatened by anyone, including the general public.

This Code has been designed to protect the democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

Introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed this Model Councillor Code of Conduct, in association with key partners and after extensive consultation with the sector, as part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance.

All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct.

The LGA will undertake an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to town and parish councils.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a “councillor” means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A “co-opted member” is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as “a person who is not a member of the authority but who

- a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
- b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee”.

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, “local authority” includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist councillors in modelling the behaviour that is expected of them, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against them. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and their specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct, at all times. The LGA encourages the use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels, all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers, should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles.

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in them, on all occasions:

- Councillors act with integrity and honesty
- Councillors act lawfully

- Councillors treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- Councillors lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor at all times.

In undertaking the role:

- Councillors impartially exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- Councillors do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- Councillors avoid conflicts of interest and register accordingly
- Councillors exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- Councillors ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to Councillors as soon as they sign the declaration of acceptance of the office or attend the first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply until they cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to Councillors when they are acting in the capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- they misuse the position as a councillor
- their actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor.

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

This Code will **not** apply in relation to your private life **unless** you make reference to your position as a Councillor. For example, if you operate a private

social media account but reference your work as a Councillor, show pictures of you acting in your role as Councillor or otherwise make it clear that you are a Councillor, then this Code will apply to your social media activity.

The Monitoring Officer has a statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and Councillors are encouraged to seek advice from your Clerk or Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and Parish

Councillors are also expected to fulfil the role of corporate parent and ensure that appropriate steps are taken to protect all children, young people and vulnerable adults living, working or in education within the Council's area and, where necessary, refer any matters that **might** amount to a safeguarding concern to Family Connect.

Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out the obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of a councillor. Should conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

The Parish Council has signed up to the Civility & Respect Pledge and will

- Treat all Councillors, Clerk, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility & respect at all times
- Put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Sign up to the Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Have in place good governance arrangements including staff contracts and a Dignity at Work Policy.
- Commit to seek professional help at early stages should civility and respect issues arise.
- Commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens
- Continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to be a role model / champion council
- Support the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility & Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.

2 Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 do not bully any person.

2.2 do not harass any person.

2.3 promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

3. Impartiality of officers of the council

As a councillor:

3.1 do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 do not disclose information:

- a. given in confidence by anyone**
- b. acquired by a councillor which they believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless**
 - i. they received the consent of a person authorised to give it;**
 - ii. required by law to do so;**

- iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
- iv. the disclosure is:
 - 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and
 - 3. consulted by the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.

4.2 do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 do not bring the role or parish council into disrepute.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 They do not misuse council resources.

7.2 They will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:

- a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and
- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as

likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which they have been elected or appointed.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor, we:

8.1 undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.

8.2 cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

8.3 do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.

8.4 comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 register and disclose all interests.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in **Table 1**, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor, we:

10.1 do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.

10.2 register with the Clerk any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25 within 28 days of its receipt.

10.3 register with the Clerk any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

Appendices

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful. They must not indicate a council decision before it has been discussed and appeared on a formal agenda. They must ensure that people are aware when they are expressing their own views, that they may not necessarily be the view of the Parish Council collectively.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B – Registering interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or re-election or re-appointment to office Councillors must register with the Clerk the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in “The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012”. You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Non-pecuniary Interests.)**

“Disclosable Pecuniary Interest” means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Clerk.
2. A ‘sensitive interest’ is an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a ‘sensitive interest’ you must notify the Clerk with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non-participation in case of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest.
Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Disclosure of Non-Pecuniary Interests

5. Where a matter arises at a meeting which *directly relates* to one of your non-pecuniary interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which *directly relates* to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which *affects* –
 - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative, close associate; or
 - c. a body included in those you need to disclose under non-pecuniary interests as set out in **Table 2**

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

8. Where a matter *affects* your financial interest or well-being:
 - a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

9. Where you have a personal interest in any business of the authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must make sure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of your interest.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her

	<p>spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council</p> <p>—</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land and Property	<p>Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council.</p> <p>‘Land’ excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.</p>
Licenses	<p>Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer</p>
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to the councillor’s knowledge)— the landlord is the council; and the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— that body (to the councillor’s knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and either—</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p>

	(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Appendix B – the Committee on Standards in Public Life

The LGA has undertaken this review whilst the Government continues to consider the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in their report on [Local Government Ethical Standards](#). If the Government chooses to implement any of the recommendations, this could require a change to this Code.

The recommendations cover:

- Recommendations for changes to the Localism Act 2011 to clarify in law when the Code of Conduct applies
- The introduction of sanctions
- An appeals process through the Local Government Ombudsman
- Changes to the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
- Updates to the Local Government Transparency Code
- Changes to the role and responsibilities of the Independent Person
- That the criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished.