

DRAFT NORMANDY PARISH COUNCIL

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCILLORS AND CO-OPTED MEMBERS

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Introduction and Interpretation

1. (1) This Code applies to you only when acting in your capacity either as a councillor or co-opted (voting) member of the Council or its committees and sub-committees.
- (2) It is your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code which will assist the Council in meeting its statutory obligation to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its councillors and co-opted members in accordance with the following principles:
 - **Selflessness.** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
 - **Integrity.** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
 - **Objectivity.** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
 - **Accountability;** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
 - **Openness.** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
 - **Honesty.** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
 - **Leadership** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

- (3) In this Code:-

a pecuniary interest is a “disclosable pecuniary interest” if it is of a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State and either

- (a) it is an interest that you have personally, or
- (b) it is an interest of:
 - (i) your spouse or civil partner,
 - (ii) a person with whom you are living as husband and wife, or
 - (iii) a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners,

and you are aware that that other person has the interest.

“meeting” means any meeting of:-

- (a) the Council;
 - (b) any of the Council’s Full Council meetings committees, working parties including any site visit authorised by the Council, or any of the aforementioned committees or working parties.
- (4) This Code does not cover matters in respect of which the Localism Act 2011 specifically provides that criminal sanctions will apply.
- (5) A failure of a councillor or co-opted member to comply with this Code is not to be dealt with otherwise than in accordance with arrangements approved by Guildford Borough Council under which allegations of such failure can be investigated and decisions on such allegations can be made. In particular, a decision is not invalidated just because something that occurred in the process of making the decision involved a failure by a councillor or co-opted member to comply with the Code.

General Obligations

2. (1) You must treat others with respect.
- (2) You must not:-
- (a) do anything which may cause the Council to breach any of the equality enactments;
 - (b) bully any person;
 - (c) intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or is likely to be:-
 - (i) a complainant,
 - (ii) a witness, or
 - (iii) involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings,in relation to an allegation that a councillor or co-opted member (including yourself) has failed to comply with this code of conduct; or
 - (d) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Council.

3. You must not:-
 - (a) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where:-
 - (i) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;
 - (ii) you are required by law to do so;
 - (iii) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - (iv) the disclosure is:-
 - (aa) reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - (bb) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council; or
 - (b) prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.
4. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or the Council into disrepute, or in a manner which is contrary to the Council's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.
5. You:-
 - (a) must not use or attempt to use your position as a councillor or co-opted member improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage; and
 - (b) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the Council's resources:-
 - (i) act in accordance with the Council's reasonable requirements;
 - (ii) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
 - (c) must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.
6.
 - (1) When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by the Parish Clerk where that officer is acting pursuant to their statutory duties.
 - (2) You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by the Council.

PART 2

INTERESTS

Registration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

7. As a councillor or co-opted member of the Council you must avoid participating in any decision where you could reasonably be seen as having an interest which compromised your honesty or objectivity. Equally you should avoid any action which might reasonably lead others to conclude that you were not acting selflessly or with integrity. In order to assist with this and to promote openness and accountability, the Guildford Borough Council, Monitoring Officer must, by law, establish and maintain a register of interests, open for inspection by the public at the Council's offices and publicly accessible on the GBC website:

<http://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/1306/Councillor-search>

8. You must, before the end of 28 days beginning with the day on which you became a councillor or co-opted member of the Council, notify the Parish Clerk of any disclosable pecuniary interests which you have at the time when the notification is given. You should be aware that these interests include those of your spouse or civil partner, a person with whom you are living as husband or wife or a person with whom you are living as if they were a civil partner so far as you are aware of the interests of that person. These interests will then be entered on the register of interests.
9. Where you become a councillor or co-opted member of the Council as a result of re-election or re-appointment, paragraph 8. applies only as regards disclosable pecuniary interests not entered in the register when the notification is given.

Disclosure of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and participation in decision making

10. Subject to paragraphs 15 to 18 (*dispensations*), if you are present at any meeting and you are aware that you have, or any other person referred to in paragraph 8 above has, a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter that will be, or is being, considered at that meeting, you must, irrespective of whether that interest has been registered:
- (a) disclose the nature of the interest to the meeting (or, if it is a sensitive interest as described in paragraph 19 below, disclose merely the fact that it is a disclosable pecuniary interest);
 - (b) not participate in any discussion or vote regarding that matter; and
 - (c) withdraw immediately from the room or chamber (including the public gallery) where the meeting considering that matter is being held.

Where you have not previously notified the Parish Clerk of that disclosable pecuniary interest you must do so within 28 days of the date of the meeting at which it became apparent.

11. Subject to paragraphs 15 to 18 (*dispensations*), if you are aware that you have, or any other person referred to in paragraph 8 above has, a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter on which either:

- (a) you are authorised to make decisions, or
- (b) you are consulted by the Parish Clerk discharging powers delegated to him,

you must not, in relation to (a) above, take any decision on that matter or, in relation to (b) above, participate in any consultation with such officer in respect of that matter

Where you have not previously notified the Parish Clerk of that disclosable pecuniary interest you must do so within 28 days of the date on which it became apparent.

12. You may participate in any business of the Council where that business relates to the Council's functions in respect of:-
- (i) housing, where you are a tenant of your authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
 - (ii) school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are a parent or guardian of a child in full-time education, or are a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
 - (iii) statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
 - (iv) an allowance, payment or indemnity given to councillors or co-opted members
 - (v) any ceremonial honour given to councillors; and
 - (vi) setting the precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Registration and Disclosure of interests other than disclosable pecuniary interests

13. Guildford Borough Council has decided that it is appropriate for you to register and disclose non-pecuniary interests that arise from your membership of or your occupation of a position of general control or management in the following bodies:
- (i) bodies to which you have been appointed or nominated by the Council;
 - (ii) bodies exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (iii) bodies directed to charitable purposes;
 - (iv) bodies whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy.

Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality

14. As a councillor or co-opted member of the Council you must avoid accepting any gift, hospitality or other favour which could give the impression of compromising your integrity, honesty or objectivity. In particular, you
- (1) should avoid any behaviour which might reasonably be seen as motivated by personal gain;
 - (2) should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you might reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor or co-opted member;
 - (3) should never accept significant gifts or hospitality (i.e. anything with a value of £25 or more) from suppliers or contractors seeking to acquire or develop business with the Council; and
 - (4) must, within 28 days of receipt or acceptance, notify the Parish Clerk of any gift you receive or hospitality you accept (of a value of £25 or more) for inclusion in the register of interests.

Dispensations

15. A councillor or co-opted member with a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter may submit a written request to the Parish Clerk for the grant of a dispensation allowing that councillor or co-opted member to participate in any discussion and/or vote on that matter at a meeting.
16. The Parish Clerk may, after having had regard to all relevant circumstances, grant a dispensation to the councillor or co-opted member only if, he considers that without the dispensation:
 - (a) the number of persons prohibited from participating in any particular business in relation to the matter would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of that business, or
17. The Parish Clerk, following reference to the Standards Committee may, after having had regard to all relevant circumstances, grant a dispensation to the councillor or co-opted member only if, the Committee considers that:
 - (a) granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the borough, or
 - (b) it is otherwise appropriate to grant the dispensation.
18. Any dispensation granted must specify the period for which it has effect, and the period specified may not exceed four years.

Sensitive Information

19. (1) Sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) apply where:
 - (a) a councillor or co-opted member of the Council has an interest (whether or not a disclosable pecuniary interest), and
 - (b) the nature of the interest is such that the councillor or co-opted member, and the Parish Clerk, consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the councillor or co-opted member, or a person connected with that councillor or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation.
- (2) If the interest is entered in the register of interests, copies of the register that are made available for inspection, and any version of the register published on the Parish Council's website, must not include details of the interest (but may state that the councillor or co-opted member has an interest the details of which are withheld under this provision of the Code).
- (3) Where a disclosable pecuniary interest is not entered on the register of interests and would otherwise require disclosure at a meeting, the councillor or co-opted member shall be entitled to merely disclose at the meeting the fact that they have such an interest in the matter concerned.

Pre-determination or bias

20. Where you have been involved in campaigning in a political role on an issue which does not impact on your personal and/or professional life you should not be prohibited from participating in a decision in your political role as councillor, however you should

not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties.

21. When making a decision, you should always consider the matter with an open mind and on the facts before the meeting at which the decision is to be taken.

Removal of entries in the register

22. An entry in the register of interests will be removed once the person concerned:

- (a) no longer has the interest, or
- (b) is (otherwise than transitorily on re-election or re-appointment) neither a councillor nor a co-opted member of the Council.

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