

Members' Code of Conduct

Introduction to the Code

This Code of Conduct is a key part of the Parish Council's discharge of its statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and co-opted members. It is very much focused upon the principles of conduct in public life of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership and it is the intention of the Parish Council that the Code be used exclusively in that context and not for any other purpose. It sets an objective, non political and high standard whose purpose is to remind members of the Parish Council of the behaviour expected of them in public life and to set out clearly the key principles against which their conduct will be measured.

The Code also contains provisions for registration and declaration of interests the breach of which will now attract potential criminal sanctions.

Broadland District Council will establish a Standards Committee to hear breaches of the Code and decide on sanctions against members found to be in default. Working closely with the District Council's Monitoring Officer and Independent Person the Standards Committee will oversee a straightforward and robust regime dealing only with substantial ethics and standards issues and filtering out the inconsequential, trivial and vexatious. The Code will deal in broad common sense principles and neither it nor the supporting arrangements are intended to be over-technical or over-procedural. To return to the wording of the statute the Code is the Parish Council's public statement on the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct in public life.

Every member and co-opted member of Hellesdon Parish Council must sign an undertaking to observe the Code in the terms set out below.

For the purposes of this Code,

- a meeting is a meeting of the Council, any of its committees, sub committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees
- a 'co-opted member' is a person who is not a member of the Parish Council but who is either a member of any committee or sub-committee of the Parish Council, or a member of, and represents the Parish Council on any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Parish Council, and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee.

The Code

As a member or co-opted member of Hellesdon Parish Council I have a responsibility to represent the community and work constructively with our staff and partner organisations to secure better social, economic and environmental outcomes for all.

In accordance with the Localism Act provisions, when acting in this capacity I am committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for our residents and maintain public confidence in this authority.

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.

As a Member of Hellesdon Parish Council my conduct will in particular address the statutory principles of the Code by:

- Championing the needs of our community.
- Dealing with representations or enquiries from residents, members of our communities and visitors fairly, appropriately and impartially.
- Not allowing other pressures, including the financial interests of myself or others connected to me, to deter me from pursuing parishioner's needs, the interests of Hellesdon nor the good governance of the Parish Council in a proper manner.
- Exercising independent judgement and not compromising my position by placing myself under obligations to outside individuals or organisations who might seek to influence the way I perform my duties as a member/co-opted member of the Parish Council.

- Listening to the interests of all parties, including relevant advice from statutory and other professional officers, taking all relevant information into consideration, remaining objective and making decisions on merit.
- Being accountable for my decisions and co-operating when scrutinised internally and externally, including by local residents.
- Contributing to making this authority's decision-making processes as open and transparent as possible to enable residents to understand the reasoning behind those decisions and to be informed when holding me and other members to account but restricting access to information when the wider public interest or the law requires it.
- Behaving in accordance with all our legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within this authority's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Parish Council's resources.
- Valuing my colleagues and staff and engaging with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect between us that is essential to good local government.
- Always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with and those I work alongside.
- Providing leadership through behaving in accordance with these principles when championing the interests of the community with other organisations as well as within this Parish Council.

The Act further provides for registration and disclosure of interests. Regulations, Definitions and Interpretations are contained in the Members' and Co-opted Members' Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests Documentation completed by each member as required by and lodged with the Monitoring Officer at Broadland District Council.

1. Interests to be declared at meetings

- 1.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting, members must declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest, non-disclosable pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest in the business to be discussed
- 1.2 If the interest is also a pecuniary interest the member must leave the room in which the meeting is being held whilst the business is being considered unless
 - (i) the member attends the meeting for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business and leaves immediately after doing so; or
 - (ii) the member has been granted a dispensation by the Clerk to the Council in accordance with the adopted Dispensation Procedure

- 1.3 A member who has disclosed a pecuniary interest must notify the Chairman immediately before leaving the meeting.
- 1.4 You have a 'non-disclosable pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest' in an item of business of the Parish Council where –
 - 1.4.1 a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the Parish for which you have been elected
 - 1.4.2 it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests listed in the Register of Interests Form, but in respect of a member of your family (other than a 'relevant person') or a person with whom you have a close association

and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest

This Code of Conduct was agreed and adopted by Hellesdon Parish Council at its meeting on 12 June 2012 and following publication of Regulations in relation to the registration and disclosure of interests was re-adopted at its meeting held on 5 March 2013.

A signed undertaking from every member and co-opted member of Hellesdon Parish Council to observe the Code is a requirement and in place.