

ALDINGBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT DECEMBER 2017

INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1 - THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

1.1 Aldingbourne Parish Council (the authority) has adopted this Code of Conduct in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of behaviour by its members and co-opted members whenever they are acting in their capacity as a member of the authority. The Code was originally introduced on 1 July 2012 and was updated on 8 November 2017.

1.2 As an elected or co-opted member of Aldingbourne Parish Council, councillors have a responsibility to represent the community and work constructively with the Council's staff and partner organisations to secure better social, economic and environmental outcomes for all.

2. PRINCIPLES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011 provisions, when acting in this capacity a councillor is committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for residents and maintain public confidence in this authority. The following are the statutory principles of the Members' Code of Conduct:

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.

SECTION 2 - MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

SCOPE

1.1 This Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you are acting in your capacity as a member, or co-opted member, of the authority, including:

at formal meetings of the authority

when acting as a representative of the authority

in taking any decision as a Cabinet Member or a Ward Councillor

in discharging your functions as a Ward Councillor

when corresponding with the authority other than in a private capacity.

1.2 In this Code "meeting" means any meeting organised by or on behalf of the authority including:

any meeting of the Council, or a Committee, Sub-Committee, Working Group, Working Party or Panel constituted by the Council

any meeting of the Cabinet and any Committee of the Cabinet

any briefing by officers

any site visit.

This Code is based on the principles set out in Section 1 of Part 8 of this Constitution.

Any allegations received by the authority that you have failed to comply with this Code will be dealt with under the Local Assessment Procedure.

GENERAL CONDUCT

2.1 As a member of Aldingbourne Parish Council, I agree to sign up to the local Members' Code of Conduct and that my conduct will in particular address the statutory principles of the Code by:

Championing the needs of residents - the whole community and in a special way my constituents, including those who did not vote for me - and putting their interests first.

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 constituents' casework, the interests of the district of Arun or the good governance of the authority 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 of this authority.

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 authority'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 authority.

REGISTER OF INTERESTS

3.1 Within 28 days of this Code being adopted by the Council, or your election (if later), you must register with the Monitoring Officer any interests that fall under any of the descriptions listed in Appendices A and B of this Code.

3.2 You must ensure that your Register of Interests is kept up to date and must notify the Monitoring Officer in writing within 28 days of becoming aware of any change in any of the descriptions listed in Appendices A and B of this Code.

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

4.1 You have a disclosable pecuniary interest if it is of a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary State, as set out at Appendix A to this Code, and either:

it is an interest of yours; or

it is an interest of:

your spouse or civil partner; or

a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or

a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners

and you are aware that other person has the interest.

4.2 You must:

4.2.1 make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest at any meeting at which you are present when an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. Where the interest is deemed a "sensitive interest" you need only declare the existence of the interest but not the detail;

4.2.2 where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether the interest is registered or not, you must not:

participate, or participate further, in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;

remain in the meeting whilst the matter is being debated;

participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;

unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

5.1 You have a personal interest in any business of the authority if it is of a description specified in Appendix B to this Code.

5.2 You have a personal interest in any business of the authority where a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well-being or financial position, or the well-being or financial position of a 'relevant person' to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or residents of your ward affected by the decision; or it relates to or is likely to affect any interests you have registered as a disclosable pecuniary interest.

5.3 A 'relevant person' is:

5.3.1 a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association;

5.3.2 any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;

5.3.3 any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or

5.3.4 any body of a type described in Appendix B.

5.4 Where you have a personal interest under paragraphs 5.3.3 or 5.3.4, you must make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any personal interest at any meeting at which you are present when an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. Where the interest is deemed a "sensitive interest", you need only declare the existence of the interest but not the detail.

5.5 Where you have a personal interest under paragraph 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, you need only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of the interest when you address the meeting on that business.

5.6 Having disclosed a personal interest and providing it is not a prejudicial interest, you may still continue to participate and vote on the matter at that meeting.

5.7 Where you have a personal interest and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must ensure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of that interest.

PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

6.1 Where you have a personal interest in any business of the authority, you also have a prejudicial interest in that business where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest (unless the matter falls within one of the exempt categories referred to at paragraph 9) and where that business:

6.1.1 affects your financial position or the financial position of a person or body defined as a 'relevant person'; or

6.1.2 relates to the determining of any approval, consent licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body defined as a 'relevant person'.

6.2 Where you have a prejudicial interest:

6.2.1 you must make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any such interest at any meeting at which you are present when an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.

6.2.2 you must not:

participate, or participate further, in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;

remain in the meeting whilst the matter is being debated;

participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;

unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

6.3 The only exception is that you may attend a meeting for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business being considered, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under statutory right or otherwise. You must leave the meeting immediately after making the representations, answering questions or giving questions.

6.4 Where, as a Cabinet Member, you may discharge a function alone, and you become aware of a prejudicial interest in a matter being dealt with, or to be dealt with by yourself, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter, or seek improperly to influence a decision about the matter.

SENSITIVE INTERESTS

7.1 Where you consider that disclosure of the details of a disclosable pecuniary interest could lead to you, or a person connected with you, being subject to violence or intimidation, you should share your concerns with the Monitoring Officer. If the Monitoring Officer agrees, he/she will not include details of the interest in the Register of Interests, but may state that you have registered an interest, the details of which are withheld under Section 32(2) of the Localism Act 2011.

EXEMPT CATEGORIES

8.1 Subject to you disclosing the interest at the meeting, you may attend a meeting and vote on a matter where you have a prejudicial interest that relates to the functions of the authority in respect of:

8.1.1 housing - where you are a tenant of the authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;

8.1.2 an allowance, payment or indemnity given to Members;

8.1.3 any ceremonial honour given to Members; and

8.1.4 setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

CRIMINAL SANCTIONS RELATING TO DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

9.1 It is a criminal offence to:

9.1.1 fail to notify the Monitoring Officer of any disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days of election;

9.1.2 fail to disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest at a meeting if it is not on the register;

9.1.3 fail to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of a disclosable pecuniary interest that is not on the register that you have disclosed to a meeting;

9.1.4 participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest (including taking a decision as a Cabinet Member acting alone);

9.1.5 fail to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the interest if you are a Cabinet Member discharging a function acting alone and have a disclosable pecuniary interest in such a matter; and

9.1.6 knowingly or recklessly provide information that is false or misleading in notifying the Monitoring Officer of a disclosable pecuniary interest or in disclosing such interest to a meeting.

9.2 The criminal penalties available to a court are to impose a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale and disqualification from being a councillor for a maximum of 5 years.

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

10.1 You also have a prejudicial interest in any business before the Overview Select Committee of the authority (or of a sub-committee of this committee) where:

that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by the Cabinet or another of the authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees, or joint sub-committees; and

at the time the decision was made or action was taken, you were a member of the Cabinet, committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken.

10.2 In such cases, you may only attend a meeting of the Overview Select Committee for the purpose of answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business. You must leave the meeting immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence.

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

11.1 You must, within 28 days of receipt, notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of any gift, benefit or hospitality with a value in excess of £25 which you have accepted as a Member from any person or body other than the authority.

11.2 The Monitoring Officer will place your notification on a public register of gifts and hospitality.

APPENDIX A - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

The duties to register, disclose and not to participate in respect of any matter in which a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest are set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 as follows:

Interest

Prescribed description

Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

Sponsorship

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by 'M' in carrying out duties as a Member, or towards the election expenses of 'M'.

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 which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:

under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and which has not been fully discharged.

Land

Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.

Licences

Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.

Corporate tenancies

Any tenancy where (to 'Ms' knowledge):

the landlord is the relevant authority; and

the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.

Securities

Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:

that body (to 'Ms' knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and

either:

the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issues share capital of that class.

These descriptions on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests are subject to the following definitions:

“the Act” means the Localism Act 2011;

“body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest” means a firm in which the relevant person is a partner or a body corporate of which the relevant person is a director, or in the securities of which the relevant person has a beneficial interest;

“director” includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society;

“land” excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for the relevant person (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income;

“M” means a member of a relevant authority;

“member” includes a co-opted member;

“relevant authority” means the authority of which M is a member;

“relevant period” means the period of 12 months ending with the day on which M gives a notification for the purposes of section 30(1) or 31(7), as the case may be, of the Act;

“relevant person” means M or any other person referred to in section 30(3)(b) of the Act;

“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 - PERSONAL INTERESTS

You have a personal interest in any business of the authority where it either relates to or is likely to affect:

any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which are appointed or nominated by the authority;

any body -

exercising functions of a public nature; or

directed to charitable purposes; or

one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

of which you are a member or in a position of control or management.

Adopted by Aldingbourne Parish Council December 5th 2017