



Dordon Parish Full Council. Tuesday 19th October 2021

Agenda Item 43. Re adoption of Code of Conduct for Parish Councillors

Adopted: Full Council – 19th October 2021. Minute reference: 43.

Review date: May 2021

Recommendation.

1. That Dordon Parish Council notes and readopts Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 Code of Conduct.
2. That Dordon Parish Council adopts NWBC's arrangements for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011 as outlined at Appendix B of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011, Dordon Parish Council ('the Council') has adopted this Code of Conduct to promote and maintain high standards of behaviour by its members and co-opted members whenever they conduct the business of the Council, including the business of the office to which they were elected or appointed, or when they claim to act or give the impression of acting as a representative of the Council.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 For the purposes of this Code, a 'co-opted member' is a person who is not a member of the Council but who is either a member of any committee or sub-committee of the Council, or a member of, and represents the Council on any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Council, and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee.
- 2.2 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.

2.3 For the purposes of this Code, and unless otherwise expressed, a reference to a member of the Council includes a co-opted member of the Council.

3. GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

3.1 Whenever councillors are acting as a Member or co-opted Member of this Parish Council they must act in accordance with the following Code of Conduct obligations.

3.2 This Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you are acting in your capacity as a member of Dordon Parish Council, including –

- a. At formal meetings of the Council, its, Committees, Sub-Committees, Task and Finish Groups and other meetings.
- b. When acting as a representative of the Council.
- c. In taking any formal decision.
- d. In discharging your functions as Parish Councillor.
- e. At briefing meetings with officers and at site visits.
- f. When corresponding with another local Council other than in a private capacity.

3.3 The Code of Conduct obligations are:

- **Selflessness.** Councillors must act solely in the public interest and must never use or attempt to use their position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, friends or close associates.
- **Integrity.** Councillors must not place themselves under a financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity.** When carrying out public duties Councillors must make all choices, such as making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, on merit. Councillors should remain objective, listen to the interests of all parties appropriately and impartially and take all relevant information, including advice from the Clerk into consideration. Councillors should exercise independent judgement. Although councillors may take account of the views of others, Councillors should reach their own conclusions on the issues before they and act in accordance with those conclusions.
- **Accountability.** Councillors are accountable to the public for their decisions and must co-operate fully with whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office, including appropriate scrutiny by local residents.
- **Openness.** Councillors must be open and transparent where possible about their decisions and actions and the decisions and actions of Dordon Parish Council. Councillors should be prepared to give reasons for those decisions and actions.
- **Honesty.** Councillors must declare any personal, pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests that relate to public duties and must take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest, including registering and declaring interests as set out in Appendix A. Councillors must only use or authorise the use of Dordon Parish Councils' resources in accordance with the authority's requirements. Councillors must, when using or authorising the use of such resources, ensure that they are used for proper purposes only. Resources must not be used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) and Councillors must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity in force from time to time.

- **Leadership.** Councillors must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving as a Member of Dordon Parish Council, by leadership and example, championing the interests of the community. Councillors should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

4. MEMBER OBLIGATIONS

- 4.1 When a member of the Council acts, claims to act or gives the impression of acting as a representative of the Council, he/she has the following obligations.
- He/she shall behave in such a way that a reasonable person would regard as respectful.
 - He/she shall not act in a way which a reasonable person would regard as bullying or intimidatory.
 - He/she shall not act in a way which is in breach of any equality or disability statutory directions.
 - He/she shall not seek to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
 - He/she shall not disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.

5. REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

- 5.1 Councillors shall register with the clerk any change to interests or new interests in Appendices A within 28 days of becoming aware of it.
- 5.2 A member need only declare the existence but not the details of any interest which the clerk agrees is a 'sensitive interest'. A sensitive interest is one which, if disclosed on a public register, could lead the member or a person connected with the member to be subject to violence or intimidation.

6. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

- 6.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest a member has declared he/she shall not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter. He/she only has to declare what his/her interest is if it is not already entered in the member's register of interests or if he/she has not notified the clerk of it.
- 6.2 Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to a sensitive interest, the member shall not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter. If it is a sensitive interest which has not already been disclosed to the clerk, the member shall disclose he/she has an interest but not the nature of it.
- 6.3 Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest the member shall not vote on the matter. He/she may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.

7. DISPENSATIONS

- 7.1 The Council may grant a member a dispensation to participate in a discussion and vote on a matter at a meeting even if he/she has an interest if the Council believes that the number of members otherwise prohibited from taking part in the meeting would impede

the transaction of the business; or it is in the interests of the inhabitants in the Council's area to allow the member to take part or it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

8. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

- 8.1 Councillors must within 28 days of receipt, notify the Clerk in writing of any gift, benefit or hospitality with a value in excess of £100 which you have accepted as a Member from any person or body other than the Authority. The Clerk will place any notification on a public register of gifts and hospitality.

9. INVESTIGATION OF CODE BREACHES BY PARISH COUNCILLORS

- 9.1 North Warwickshire Borough Council will be the lead authority for undertaking any formal investigations of code breaches by parish councillors. NWBC's Arrangements for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011 are attached at Appendix B.
- 9.2 Complaints of a breach of the Councillors Code of Conduct regarding Dordon Parish Councillors should be made to North Warwickshire Borough Council's Monitoring Officer.

END

APPENDIX A.

Extract from the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

- The following categories are Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
- “M” denotes the relevant Elected Member
- The regulations apply if the disclosable pecuniary interest is a members, a members spouse or civil partner, or is the pecuniary interest of somebody with whom a member is living as a husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Subject	Prescribed Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>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.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992(1).</p>
Contracts	<p>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 —</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	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 M’s knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to M’s knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either: (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (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 relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

APPENDIX B.

Arrangements for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011

1 Context

These “Arrangements” set out how you may make a complaint that an elected or co-opted member of this authority or of a parish council within North Warwickshire has failed to comply with the authority’s Code of Conduct, and sets out how the authority will deal with allegations of a failure to comply with the authority’s Code of Conduct.

Under Section 28(6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011, the Council must have in place “arrangements” under which allegations that a member or co-opted member of the authority, or of a Committee or Sub-Committee of the authority, or of a parish council within the authority’s area has failed to comply with that authority’s Code of Conduct can be investigated and decisions made on such allegations.

Such arrangements must provide for the authority to appoint at least one Independent Person, whose views must be sought by the authority before it takes a decision on an allegation which it has decided shall be investigated, and whose views can be sought by the authority at any other stage, or by a member or a member or co-opted member of a parish council against whom an allegation as been made.

2 The Code of Conduct

The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for members, is available for inspection on the authority’s website and on request from Reception at the Council’s Offices. https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/downloads/file/2338/the_model_code_of_conduct_for_members_of_local_authorities

Each parish council is also required to adopt a Code of Conduct. If you wish to inspect a Parish Council’s Code of Conduct, you should inspect any website operated by the parish council or request the parish clerk to allow you to inspect the parish council’s Code of Conduct.

3 Making a complaint

If you wish to make a complaint, please write to:

Steve Maxey
Monitoring Officer
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Council Offices
South Street
Atherstone
Warwickshire
CV9 1DE

Or email: stevemaxey@northwarks.gov.uk

The Monitoring Officer is a senior officer of the authority who has statutory responsibility for maintaining the register of members' interests and who is responsible for administering the system in respect of complaints of member misconduct.

In order to ensure that we have all the information which we need to be able to process your complaint, please complete and send us the model complaint form, which can be downloaded from the authority's website, next to the Code of Conduct, and is available on request from the One Stop Shop at the Council's Offices.

Please do provide us with your name and a contact address or email address, so that we can acknowledge receipt of your complaint and keep you informed of its progress. If you want to keep your name and address confidential, please indicate this in the space provided on the complaint form, in which case we will not disclose your name and address to the member against whom you make the complaint, without your prior consent. The authority does not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless there is a clear public interest in doing so.

The Monitoring Officer will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days of receiving it, and will keep you informed of the progress of your complaint.

4 Will your complaint be investigated?

The Monitoring Officer will review every complaint received and, after consultation with the Independent Person and the Group Spokespersons on the Standards Committee, take a decision as to whether it merits formal investigation. This decision will normally be taken within 14 days of receipt of your complaint. Where the Monitoring Officer has taken a decision, he/she will inform you of his/her decision and the reasons for that decision.

If the complainant is not happy with that decision, the matter will be reported to the Standards Committee for Councillors to review that decision.

Where he/she requires additional information in order to come to a decision, he/she may come back to you for such information, and may request information from the member against whom your complaint is directed. Where your complaint relates to a Parish Councillor, the Monitoring Officer may also inform the Parish Council of your complaint and seek the views of the Parish Council before deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally, without the need for a formal investigation. Such informal resolution may involve the member accepting that his/her conduct was unacceptable and/or offering an apology, or other remedial action by the authority. Where the member or the authority makes a reasonable offer of local resolution, but you are not willing to accept that offer, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

If your complaint identifies criminal conduct or breach of other regulation by any person, the Monitoring Officer has the power to call in the Police and other regulatory agencies.

5 How is the investigation conducted?

The Council has adopted a procedure for the investigation of misconduct complaints, which is attached as Appendix Two to these arrangements.

If the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee decides that a complaint merits formal investigation, he/she will appoint an Investigating Officer, who may be another officer of the authority, an officer of another authority or an external investigator. The Investigating Officer will decide whether he/she needs to meet or speak to you to understand the nature of your complaint

and so that you can explain your understanding of events and suggest what documents the Investigating Officer needs to see, and who the Investigating Officer needs to interview.

The Investigating Officer would normally write to the member against whom you have complained and provide him/her with a copy of your complaint, and ask the member to provide his/her explanation of events, and to identify what documents he needs to see and who he needs to interview. In exceptional cases, where it is appropriate to keep your identity confidential or disclosure of details of the complaint to the member might prejudice the investigation, the Monitoring Officer can delete your name and address from the papers given to the member, or delay notifying the member until the investigation has progressed sufficiently.

At the end of his/her investigation, the Investigating Officer will produce a draft report and will send copies of that draft report, in confidence, to you and to the member concerned, to give you both an opportunity to identify any matter in that draft report which you disagree with or which you consider requires more consideration.

Having received and taken account of any comments which you may make on the draft report, the Investigating Officer will send his/her final report to the Monitoring Officer.

6 What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is no evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?

The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and, if he is satisfied that the Investigating Officer's report is sufficient, the Monitoring Officer will write to you and to the member concerned and to the Parish Council, where your complaint relates to a Parish Councillor, notifying you that he is satisfied that no further action is required, and give you both a copy of the Investigating Officer's final report. If the Monitoring Officer is not satisfied that the investigation has been conducted properly, he may ask the Investigating Officer to reconsider his/her report.

The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Group Spokesperson, may still report the findings of the Investigating Officer to the Standards Committee.

7 What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?

The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and will then either send the matter for local hearing before the Hearings Panel or, after consulting the Independent Person and Group Spokespersons on the Standards Committee, seek local resolution.

7.1 Local Resolution

The Monitoring Officer may consider that the matter can reasonably be resolved without the need for a hearing. In such a case, he/she will consult with the Independent Person, Group Spokespersons on the Standards Committee and with you as complainant and seek to agree what you consider to be a fair resolution which also helps to ensure higher standards of conduct for the future. Such resolution may include the member accepting that his/her conduct was unacceptable and/or offering an apology, and/or other remedial action by the authority. If the member complies with the suggested resolution, the Monitoring Officer will report the matter to the Standards Committee and the Parish Council for information, but will take no further action. However, if you tell the Monitoring Officer that any suggested resolution would not be adequate, the Monitoring Officer will refer the matter for a local hearing.

7.2 Local Hearing

If the Monitoring Officer considers that local resolution is not appropriate, or you are not satisfied by the proposed resolution, or the member concerned is not prepared to undertake any proposed remedial action, such as giving an apology, then the Monitoring Officer will report the Investigating Officer's report to the Hearings Panel which will conduct a local hearing before deciding whether the member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and, if so, whether to take any action in respect of the member.

The Council has agreed a procedure for local hearings, which is attached as Appendix Three to these arrangements.

Essentially, the Monitoring Officer will conduct a "pre-hearing process", requiring the member to give his/her response to the Investigating Officer's report, in order to identify what is likely to be agreed and what is likely to be in contention at the hearing, and the Chair of the Hearings Panel may issue directions as to the manner in which the hearing will be conducted. At the hearing, the Investigating Officer will present his/her report, call such witnesses as he/she considers necessary and make representations to substantiate his/her conclusion that the member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct. For this purpose, the Investigating Officer may ask you as the complainant to attend and give evidence to the Hearings Panel. The member will then have an opportunity to give his/her evidence, to call witnesses and to make representations to the Hearings Panel as to why he/she considers that he/she did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct.

The Hearings Panel, with the benefit of any advice from the Independent Person, may conclude that the member did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, and so dismiss the complaint. If the Hearings Panel concludes that the member did fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Chair will inform the member of this finding and the Hearings Panel will then consider what action, if any, the Hearings Panel should take as a result of the member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. In doing this, the Hearings Panel will give the member an opportunity to make representations to the Panel and will consult the Independent Person, but will then decide what action, if any, to take in respect of the matter..

8 What action can the Hearings Panel take where a member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct?

The Council has delegated to the Hearings Panel such of its powers to take action in respect of individual members as may be necessary to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Accordingly the Hearings Panel may:

- 8.1 Censure or reprimand the member;
- 8.2 Publish its findings in respect of the member's conduct;
- 8.3 Report its findings to Council or to the Parish Council for information;
- 8.4 Recommend to the member's Group Leader (or in the case of un-grouped members, recommend to Council or to Committees) that he/she be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;
- 8.5 Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the member be removed from particular responsibilities;
- 8.6 Instruct the Monitoring Officer to or recommend that the Parish Council arrange training for the member;

- 8.7 Remove or recommend to the Parish Council that the member be removed from all outside appointments to which he/she has been appointed or nominated by the authority or by the Parish Council;
- 8.8 Withdraw or recommend to the Parish Council that it withdraws facilities provided to the member by the Council, such as a computer, website and/or email and Internet access; or
- 8.9 Exclude or recommend that the Parish Council exclude the member from the Council's offices or other premises, with the exception of meeting rooms as necessary for attending Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

The Hearings Panel has no power to suspend or disqualify the member or to withdraw members' special responsibility allowances.

9 What happens at the end of the hearing?

At the end of the hearing, the Chair will state the decision of the Hearings Panel as to whether the member failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and as to any actions which the Hearings Panel resolves to take.

As soon as reasonably practicable thereafter, the Monitoring Officer shall prepare a formal decision notice in consultation with the Chair of the Hearings Panel, and send a copy to you, to the member and to the Parish Council, make that decision notice available for public inspection and report the decision to the next convenient meeting of the Council.

10 Who are the Hearings Panel?

The Hearings Panel is a sub-committee of the Council's Standards Committee. The Standards Committee has decided that it will comprise a maximum of five members of the Council, including members drawn from at least two different political parties. Subject to those requirements, it is appointed on the nomination of party group leaders in proportion to the strengths of each party group on the Council.

The Independent Person is invited to attend all meetings of the Hearings Panel and his/her views are sought and taken into consideration before the Hearings Panel takes any decision on whether the member's conduct constitutes a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and as to any action to be taken following a finding of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.

11 Who is the Independent Person?

The Independent Person is a person who has applied for the post following advertisement of a vacancy for the post, and is appointed by a positive vote from a majority of all the members of Council.

A person cannot be "independent" if he/she:

- 11.1 Is, or has been within the past five years, a member, co-opted member or officer of the authority, with the exception that former Independent Members of Standards Committees can be appointed as Independent Persons;
- 11.2 Is or has been within the past five years, a member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council within the authority's area, or

- 11.3 Is a relative, or close friend, of a person within paragraph 11.1 or 11.2 above. For this purpose, “relative” means:
- 11.3.1 Spouse or civil partner;
 - 11.3.2 Living with the other person as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners;
 - 11.3.3 Grandparent of the other person;
 - 11.3.4 A lineal descendant of a grandparent of the other person;
 - 11.3.5 A parent, sibling or child of a person within paragraphs 11.3.1 or 11.3.2;
 - 11.3.6 A spouse or civil partner of a person within paragraphs 11.3.3, 11.3.4 or 11.3.5; or
 - 11.3.7 Living with a person within paragraphs 11.3.3, 11.3.4 or 11.3.5 as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners.

12 Revision of these arrangements

The Council may by resolution agree to amend these arrangements, and has delegated to the Chair of the Hearings Panel the right to depart from these arrangements where he/she considers that it is expedient to do so in order to secure the effective and fair consideration of any matter.

13 Appeals

There is no right of appeal for you as complainant or for the member against a decision of the Monitoring Officer or of the Hearings Panel.

If you feel that the authority has failed to deal with your complaint properly, you may make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

[Review date: May 2022.](#)

These policy was adopted by Dordon Parish Council at agenda item 43 on 19th October 2021.

CLlr Byron Melia.

Chair. Dordon Parish Council.