

UPPER SHERINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction to the Code

This Code of Conduct is a key part of the Authority'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 Authority 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 Authority 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.

North Norfolk 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 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 working of the statute, the Code of the Authority's statement on the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct in public life.

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

The Code

As a member or co-opted member of Upper Sheringham 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 Upper Sheringham Parish Council 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 North Norfolk nor 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/co-opted 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 this Authority.

1. Registration of Members Interests

An Interest Form must be completed within 28 days of the member holding office. This includes details relating to property and land in the district and work and business. These interests are known as Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI). The form should also include interests relating to club memberships and other local interests. The form is given to the Clerk, who will retain a copy, and forward to NNDC for posting on their website. While there is no need for a member to declare a DPI at a meeting if it is on their Interest Form it is best practice to declare this interest at the start of the meeting or when it might come up in discussion. Members are also required to declare an interest which may not be on their Interest Form. A member may apply for a dispensation to talk and even vote on an agenda item. See Dispensations below.

2. Declaration of Interests at Meetings

Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 sets out what a member must do if they have a DPI in a matter to be discussed at a meeting at which the member is present. Section 31 applies to all Councillors and co-opted members of committees who are not Councillors but who by law are allowed to vote. A DPI is an interest of either the member or their spouse or civil partner. There are national rules relating to DPI's as in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011. A member should also disclose an interest (although not a DPI) where a member of the public might consider that member could be influenced in any decision they make.

3. Granting a Dispensation

Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 says that a Local Council may grant a dispensation which allows a member to talk and even vote on an item in which they have a DPI if the Council considers that:

- a) without the dispensation the number of members prohibited from participating in an agenda item would be so great as to impede the transaction or
- b) granting the dispensation is in the interest of persons living in the area or
- c) it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

A dispensation request must be made in writing to the Clerk and if granted the period for which it has effect must be specified but it may not exceed four years. (There is no need to grant a dispensation for setting of the precept)

Adopted 2012. Amended July 2018

Reviewed and amended 7th July 2022