

RUSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF RUSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Reviewed & Approved by Ruscombe Parish Council – 1st July 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

This Code of Conduct was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July 2020 pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 and its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council. It will come into effect as from 1st July 2020

2. APPLICATION

- 2.1. This Code of Conduct applies to you as a member of this Council when you are acting or purporting to act in your role as a member and you have a responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code.
- 2.2. This Code of Conduct is consistent with and based upon the following principles:
 - Selflessness
 - Integrity
 - Objectivity
 - Accountability
 - Openness
 - Honesty
 - LeadershipThe above terms are expanded at the end of this Code under the heading 'The Principles'.
- 2.3. Should a complaint be made against you in your role as a Councillor it will be dealt with in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and its supporting regulations.

3. GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

When acting or purporting to act in your role as a member of the Council, you must have regard to the following obligations. If you are not acting in your role as Councillor then no breach of the Code is likely to occur:

- 3.1. RESPECT
Treat members, officers, members of the public and service providers with courtesy and respect and do not engage in bullying or intimidating behaviour or behaviour which could be regarded as bullying or intimidation.
- 3.2. BRIBERY ACT 2010
Ensure that you are aware of and comply with the requirements which the Bribery Act 2010 places on you in your role as a Member and on the Council.
- 3.3. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION
 - 3.3.1. Do not disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone or information acquired by you which you believe or are aware is of a confidential nature.
 - 3.3.2. You may disclose such information where:-
 - (i) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it
 - (ii) you are required to do so by law
 - (iii) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice
 - (iv) the disclosure is reasonable and in the public interest

(v) is made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council or "its professional advisers".

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- 3.4. Do not prevent another person from accessing information if that person is entitled to do so by law.

DECISION MAKING

- 3.5. When involved in the decision making of the Council:
- 3.5.1. Have regard to any advice provided to you by the Wokingham Borough Council's Chief Financial Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Responsible Officer/Clerk to Boxford Parish Council pursuant to their statutory duties.
- 3.5.2. Give reasons for the decisions in accordance with any legal requirements or reasonable requirements of the Council.

RESOURCES

- 3.6. When using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Council:-
- 3.6.1. Do act in accordance with the Council's reasonable requirements including the requirements of the Council's relevant policies. Copies of these policies have been provided to you, and you are deemed to have read and understood them.
- 3.6.2. The Policies referred to in paragraph 3.6.1 may be updated from time to time and you will be notified of any changes. You must comply with the updated policies as soon as you have been provided with a copy of the same.
- 3.6.3. Make sure that such resources are used for and in accordance with your duties as a Councillor and are not used improperly.

USE OF INFORMATION

- 3.7. Do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of your role as a member for the advancement of your disclosable pecuniary interests.

PUBLICITY

- 3.8. Have regard to the applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity under the Local Government Act 1986.

4. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND INTERESTS OTHER THAN DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

4.1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

- 4.1.1. By virtue of the Localism Act 2011 and The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 you must disclose and register disclosable pecuniary interests as defined in the foregoing legislation by notifying the Monitoring Officer within 28 days
- (a) the adoption of this Code or
- (b) becoming a member of the Council or
- (c) becoming aware of such an interest
- 4.1.2. Failure to disclose such interests may result in prosecution by which could result in a fine not exceeding £5,000.00 (Level 5 on the Standard scale).
- 4.1.3. A Disclosable Pecuniary Interest [DPI] is an interest of yourself or your partner (which means 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 you are civil partners). The descriptions of disclosable pecuniary interests are set out in Appendix 1 to this Code of Conduct.

4.2. Other Interests

- 4.2.1. You must, within 28 days of:
- (a) this Code being adopted by or applied ; or

- (b) your election or appointment to office (where that is later),
- (c) notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of the details of your other personal interests, where they fall within the following descriptions, for inclusion in the register of interests.

4.2.2. You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where either:

- (a) it relates to or is likely to affect
 - (i) any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority;
 - (ii) any body
 - (aa) exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (bb) directed to charitable purposes; or
 - (cc) 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 general control or management;
 - (iii) any easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for you (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income.

4.3. Disclosure of interests

4.3.1. Subject to sub-paragraphs 4.3.2 to 4.3.5, where you have a personal interest described in paragraph 4.2 above or in paragraph 4.3.2 below in any business of your authority, and where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest, and you attend a meeting of your authority at which the business is considered, you must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

4.3.2. You have a personal interest in any business of your authority

- (i) 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 inhabitants of the electoral division or ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision, or
- (ii) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests you have registered as a disclosable pecuniary interest.

In sub-paragraph 4.3.2, a *relevant person* is:

- (a) a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association; or
- (b) 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;
- (c) any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000.00; or
- (d) any body of a type described in paragraph 4.2.2(a)(i) or (ii).
- (iii) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect a person described in paragraph 4.2.2(a)(i) or 4.2.2(a)(ii)(aa), you need only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest when you address the meeting on that business.
- (iv) Where you have a personal interest but, by virtue of paragraph 5, sensitive information relating to it is not registered in your authority's register of members' interests, you must indicate to the meeting that you have a personal interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to the meeting.
- (v) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority 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.

4.4. Register of interests

4.4.1. Any interests notified to the Monitoring Officer will be included in the register of interests. A copy of the register will be available for public inspection and will be published on the authority's website.

4.5. Non participation in case of pecuniary interest

(1) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority you also have a pecuniary 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 and where that business;

(a) affects your financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in paragraphs 4.2.2 ;or

(b) relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in paragraph.

(2) Subject to paragraph (3) and (4), where you have a pecuniary interest in any business of your authority;

(a) you may not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting.

(b) you may not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

(c) if the interest is not registered, you must disclose the interest to the meeting.

(d) if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days.

Note: In addition the Rules of Procedure of the Council and its Committees require you to leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion or voting takes place.

(3) Where you have a pecuniary interest in any business of your authority, you may attend a meeting but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise and you leave the room where the meeting is held immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence.

(4) Subject to you disclosing the interest at the meeting, you may attend a meeting and vote on a matter where you have a pecuniary interest that relates to the functions of your authority 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 members;

(v) any ceremonial honour given to members; and

(vi) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Where, as an executive member, you may discharge a function alone, and you become aware of a pecuniary interest in a matter being dealt with, or to be dealt with by you, 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.

4.6. Interests arising in relation to overview and scrutiny committees

4.6.1. In any business before an overview and scrutiny committee of your authority (or of a sub-committee of such a committee) where:

- (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by the executive or another of your authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
 - (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken, you were a member of the executive, committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee mentioned in paragraph 4.6.1(a) above and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken,
- 4.6.2. You may only attend a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee for the purpose of answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, and you must leave the room where the meeting is held immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence.

5. SENSITIVE INTERESTS

- 5.1. Where a member is concerned that the disclosure of the details of an interest (either a DPI or any other interest which the member is required to disclose) at a meeting or on the Register of Members' Interests, and such disclosure would lead to the member or a person associated with him/her being subject to violence or intimidation, the member may request the Monitoring Officer agree that such interest is a sensitive interest.
- 5.2. If the Monitoring Officer agrees that the interest is a sensitive interest the member must still disclose the existence of the interest at a relevant meeting but the member is not required to provide the details of the sensitive interest during the meeting. The Monitoring Officer shall also exclude the details of the sensitive interest from the published version of the Register of Members' Interests.

6. DISCLOSURE AND PARTICIPATION

- 6.1. Should you have a disclosable pecuniary interest you **MUST NOT** take part in the decision making process of the Council and in order to ensure transparency you must withdraw from such process as regards that DPI.
- 6.2. The Localism Act 2011 makes participation in such matters if you have a DPI a criminal offence.

7. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

- 7.1. You must disclose and record any gift or hospitality you receive in your capacity as a member of the Council in excess of £25.00. Such disclosure should be made in writing or by email to the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Council's Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality.

8. DISPENSATIONS

- 8.1. Members who have a disclosable pecuniary [or other interest] may apply for a dispensation on specific grounds which are set out in the Dispensation Procedure set out in Appendix 2 to this Code of Conduct.

9. INTERPRETATION

"Co-opted member", means a person who is not a member of the Council but who:-

- (a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the Council; or
- (b) is 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 which is to be decided at any meeting of the committee or sub-committee.

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)" means those interests prescribed by the Secretary of State as such under the Localism Act 2011 and set out in Appendix 1 to this Code of Conduct.

"Other Interests" means interests other than DPI's which a member is required (by law) to disclose.

“Meeting” means any meeting of:-

- (a) the Council;
- (b) the executive of the Council;
- (c) any of the Council’s or its executive’s committees, sub-committees, joint committees, joint sub-committees, or area committees;

whether or not the press and public are excluded from the meeting in question by virtue of a resolution of members.

“Member” includes a co-opted member.

“Bullying and intimidating behaviour” means offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour which attempts to undermine, hurt or humiliate an individual or group. It can have a damaging effect on a victim’s confidence, capability and health.

Bullying conduct can involve behaving in an abusive or threatening way, or making allegations about people in public, in the company of their colleagues, through the press or in blogs, (but within the scope of the Code of Conduct).

It may happen once or be part of a pattern of behaviour, although minor isolated incidents are unlikely to be considered bullying. It is also unlikely that a member will be found guilty of bullying when both parties have contributed to a breakdown in relations.

THE PRINCIPLES

(referred to in paragraph 2.2 above)

- **Selflessness**

Members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

- **Honesty and Integrity**

Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

- **Objectivity**

Members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

- **Accountability**

Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

- **Openness**

Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

- **Leadership**

Members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

Appendix 1

In the extracts from the Regulations below, 'M' means you, when acting as a member of the Council, and 'relevant person' means you and your partner, as above)

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Prescribed description</i>
<i>Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation</i>	<i>Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.</i>
<i>Sponsorship</i>	<i>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.</i>
<i>Contracts</i>	<i>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— (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.</i>
<i>Land</i>	<i>Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.</i>
<i>Licences</i>	<i>Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.</i>
<i>Corporate tenancies</i>	<i>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.</i>

In the extracts from the Regulations below, 'M' means you, when acting as a member of the Council, and 'relevant person' means you and your partner, as above)