

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Policy Number 43		
Issue No.	Date completed	Details of amendments
1	May 2007	FC.011.05.07
2.	28.04.08	FC.092.04.08
3.	09.07.12	FC.25.07.12 – Complete revision of the Code
4.	13.01.14	FC.70.01.14 - Revisions as suggested by WDC
5.	03.10.15	GP – for noting following review of Standing Orders at Full Council.
6	02.03.20	Full Council - consideration of amendments

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

As a Member or co-opted Member of Uckfield Town 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 Council.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

1. Selflessness
Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. Integrity
Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
3. Objectivity
Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. Accountability
Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. Openness
Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. Honesty
Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. Leadership
Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

On their election or co-option to Uckfield Town Council, Members are required to sign an undertaking to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct, adopted by the Council on the 13th January 2014 is set out below. It is made under Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 and includes, as standing orders made under Chapter 7 of that Act and Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, provisions which require Members to leave meetings in appropriate circumstances, while matters in which they have a personal interest are being considered.

PART 1 – GENERAL PROVISIONS

Introduction and interpretation

1. (1) This Code applies to **you** as a member of the Council when acting in that capacity.
- (2) This Code is based upon seven principles fundamental to public service, which are set out above. You should have regard to these principles as they will help you to comply with the Code.
- (3) If you need guidance on any matter under this Code you should seek it from the Council's Proper Officer, the authority's Monitoring Officer or your own legal adviser – but it is entirely your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code.
- (4) It is a criminal offence to fail to notify the Council's Proper Officer or the authority's Monitoring Officer of a disclosable pecuniary interest, to take part in discussions or votes at meetings, or to take a decision where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, without reasonable excuse. It is also an offence to knowingly or recklessly to provide false or misleading information to the Council's Proper Officer or the authority's Monitoring Officer.
- (5) Any written allegation received by the authority that you have failed to comply with this Code will be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer and District Council's Standards Committee under the arrangements which it has adopted for such purposes. If it is found that you have failed to comply with the Code, the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee have the right to have regard to this failure in deciding -
 - (a) whether to take action in relation to you; and
 - (b) what action to take.
- (6) Councillors are required to comply with any request regarding the provision of information in relation to a complaint alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct and must comply with any formal standards investigation.
- (7) Councillors should not seek to misuse the standards process, for example, by making trivial or malicious allegations against another councillor for the purposes of political gain.
- (8) In this Code —

“Authority” means Wealden District Council.

“Code” means this Code of Conduct.

“Co-opted Member” means a person who is not a member of the Council but who -

- (a) is a member of any committee, sub-committee, working group or steering group 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 that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee, sub-committee working group or steering group.

"Council" means Uckfield Town Council.

"Meeting" means any meeting of —

- (a) the Council;
- (b) any of the Council's committees, sub-committees, working groups or steering groups.

"Member" includes a co-opted Member.

"Monitoring Officer" for the authority means the Monitoring Officer who is the Monitoring Officer for Wealden District Council and all Parish and Town Councils in the District Council area.

"Register of Members' Interests" means the Council's Register of Members' Pecuniary and other Interests established and maintained by the authority's Monitoring Officer under section 29 of the Localism Act 2011.

Scope

2. (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (3), you must comply with this Code whenever you -
- (a) conduct the business of your Council (which, in this Code, includes the business of the office to which you are elected or appointed); or
 - (b) act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting as a representative of your Council,
- and references to your official capacity are construed accordingly.
- (2) This Code does not have effect in relation to your conduct other than where it is in your official capacity.
- (3) Where you act as a representative of your Council –
- (a) on another relevant authority, you must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority's Code of Conduct; or
 - (b) on any other body, you must, when acting for that other body, comply with your Council's Code of Conduct, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

General obligations

3. (1) You must treat others with respect

(2) You must not -

(a) do anything which may cause your Council to breach any of its equality duties (in particular as set out in the Equality Act 2010);

(b) bully or harass any person;

(Note: Bullying may be characterised as: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Harassment may be characterised as unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating and individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for an individual.)

For examples of conduct that constitute bullying or harassment see Annex A.

(c) intimidate or improperly influence or attempt to intimidate or improperly influence any person who is or is likely to be -

(i) a complainant,

(ii) a witness, or

(iii) involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings, in relation to an allegation that a Member (including yourself) has failed to comply with his or her Council's Code of Conduct; or

(d) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your Council.

4. You must not -

(a) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where -

(i) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;

(ii) you are required by law to do so;

(iii) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or

(iv) the disclosure is -

(a) reasonable and in the public interest; and

(b) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council;

(b) prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

5. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or Council into disrepute.

6. You -
 - (a) must not use or attempt to use your position as a Member improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage;
 - (b) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your Council -
 - (i) act in accordance with your Council's reasonable requirements;
 - (ii) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
 - (c) must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

7. (1) When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by -
 - (a) your Council's Proper Officer; or
 - (b) your Council's Responsible Finance Officer,
 where that officer is acting pursuant to his or her statutory duties.

 (2) You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your Council.

PART 2 – INTERESTS

Personal interests

8. (1) The interests described in paragraphs 8(3) and 8(5) are your personal interests and the interests in paragraph 8(5) are your pecuniary interests which are disclosable pecuniary interests as defined by section 30 of the Localism Act 2011.

- (2) If you fail to observe Parts 2 and 3 of the Code in relation to your personal interests -
 - (a) the authority may deal with the matter as mentioned in paragraph 1(5) and
 - (b) if the failure relates to a disclosable pecuniary interest, you may also become subject to criminal proceedings as mentioned in paragraph 1(4).

- (3) You have a personal interest in any business of your Council 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 Council;
 - (ii) any body -
 - (a) exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (b) directed to charitable purposes; or
 - (c) 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) the interests of any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50
- (b) 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 (in the case of Councils with electoral divisions or wards) other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral division or ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision;
- (4) In sub-paragraph (3)(b), a relevant person is -
- (a) a member of your family or a close associate; 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; or
 - (d) any body of a type described in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) or (ii).
- (5) Subject to sub-paragraph (6), you have a personal interest which is also a disclosable pecuniary interest as defined by Section 30 of the Localism Act 2011 in any business of your Council where:
- (i) you or
 - (ii) 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) have any interest within the following descriptions:-

Interest	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 Council) 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 Council - (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant Council.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant Council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to M's knowledge) – (a) the landlord is the relevant Council; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.

Interest	Description
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 Council; and</p> <p>(b) either –</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(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>

- (6) In sub-paragraph (5), any interest which your partner may have is only treated as your interest if you are aware that that your partner has the interest.

Disclosure of personal interests (See also Part 3)

8. (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (6), where you have a personal interest in any business of your Council and you attend a meeting of your Council at which any matter relating to 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.
- (2) If the personal interest is entered on the Council's register there is no requirement for you to disclose the interest to that meeting, but you should do so if you wish a disclosure to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- (3) Sub-paragraph (1) only applies where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest.
- (4) Where you have a personal interest but, by virtue of paragraph 14, sensitive information relating to it is not registered in your Council's register of Members' interests, you must indicate to the meeting that you have a personal interest and, if also applicable, that it is a disclosable pecuniary interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to the meeting.

Prejudicial interest generally

9. (1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a personal interest in any business of your Council you also have a prejudicial interest in that business where either -
- (a) the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest as described in paragraph 8(5), or

- (b) 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.
- (2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b), you do not have a prejudicial interest in any business of the Council where that business -
- (a) does not affect your financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in paragraph 8;
 - (b) does not relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in paragraph 8; or
 - (c) relates to the functions of your Council in respect of -
 - (i) housing, where you are a tenant of your Council 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.

Effect of prejudicial interests on participation

- 10. (1)** Subject to sub-paragraph (2) and (3), where you have a prejudicial interest in any matter in relation to the business of your Council -
- (a) you must not participate, or participate further, in any discussion of the matter at any meeting, or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting and must withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting considering the matter is being held -
 - (i) in a case where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence;
 - (ii) in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the matter is being considered at that meeting;

unless you have obtained a dispensation from your Council's Proper Officer or the authority's Monitoring Officer;
 - (b) you must not exercise executive functions in relation to that matter; and

- (c) you must not seek improperly to influence a decision about that matter.
- (2) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your Council which is not a disclosable pecuniary interest as described in paragraph 8(5), you may attend a meeting (including a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee of your Council or of a sub-committee of such a committee) 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.
- (3) Where you have a prejudicial interest which is not a disclosable pecuniary interest as described in paragraph 8(5), arising solely from membership of any body described 8(3)(a)(i) or 8(3)(a)(ii)(a) then you do not have to withdraw from the room or chamber and may make representations to the committee but may not participate in the vote.

PART 3 – REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

Registration of Members' interests

- 11.** (1) Subject to paragraph 12, you must, within 28 days of -
- (a) this Code being adopted by the Council; or
 - (b) your election or appointment to office (where that is later), register in the register of Members' interests details of -
 - (i) your personal interests where they fall within a category mentioned in paragraph 8(3)(a) and
 - (ii) your personal interests which are also disclosable pecuniary interests where they fall within a category mentioned in paragraph 8(5)
- by providing written notification to your Council's Proper Officer.
- (2) Subject to paragraph 12, you must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new personal interest falling within sub-paragraphs (1)(b)(i) or (1)(b)(ii) or any change to any personal interest registered under sub-paragraphs (1)(b)(i) or (1)(b)(ii), register details of that new personal interest or change by providing written notification to your Council's Proper Officer.

Sensitive information

- 12.** (1) Where you consider that the information relating to any of your personal interests is sensitive information, and your authority's Monitoring Officer agrees, the Monitoring Officer shall not include details of the interest on any copies of the register of Members' interests which are made available for inspection or any published version of the register, but may include a statement that you have an interest, the details of which are withheld under this paragraph.
- (2) You must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change of circumstances which means that information excluded under paragraph (1) is no longer sensitive information, notify your authority's Monitoring

Officer asking that the information be included in the register of Members' interests.

- (3) In this Code, "sensitive information" means information, the details of which, if disclosed, could lead to you or a person connected with you being subject to violence or intimidation.

Dispensations

- 15** (1) The District Council's Standards Committee, Monitoring Officer or the Council's Proper Officer may, on a written request made by a Member, grant a dispensation relieving the Member from either or both of the restrictions in paragraph 10(1)(a) (restrictions on participating in discussions and in voting), in cases described in the dispensation.
- (2) A dispensation may be granted only if, after having had regard to all relevant circumstances, the District Council's Standards Committee, Monitoring Officer or the Council's Proper Officer -
 - (a) considers that without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited by paragraph 10 from participating in any particular business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business,
 - (b) considers that without the dispensation the representation of different political groups on the body transacting any particular business would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of any vote relating to the business,
 - (c) considers that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area,
 - (d) considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.
 - (2) A dispensation must specify the period for which it has effect, and the period specified may not exceed four years.
 - (3) Paragraph 10 does not apply in relation to anything done for the purpose of deciding whether to grant a dispensation under this paragraph.