



# The Haslemere Town Council Members' Code of Conduct

Adopted May 2019

## Introduction and Interpretation

1. (1) This Code applies to you as a Member of Haslemere Town Council ("the Council") when you act in your role as a Member, including the use of email or social media platforms.
- (2) You are a representative of the Council and the public will view you as such. Your actions can impact on how the Council as a whole is viewed.
- (3) is under a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members. This Code is based on and is consistent with the seven "Nolan principles" of public life set out in Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 which the Council endorses:

**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.

- (4) It is your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code when acting in your capacity as a Member.

- (5) In this Code:
- (i) “Member” includes elected councillors, and co-opted or appointed members.
  - (ii) A “Disclosable Pecuniary Interest” is an interest within the prescribed descriptions set out in Annexe 1 that you have personally, or that is an interest of your spouse or civil partner, a person with whom you are living as husband and wife, or a person with whom you are living as if your were civil partners, and you are aware that that person has the interest.
  - (ii) “meeting” means any meeting of
    - (a) the Council
    - (b) any of the Council’s committees, sub-committees or working parties.
- (6) If you are unsure about whether or not the code of conduct applies to a particular situation, you should consult the Town Clerk.
- (7) A failure of a Member to comply with this Code of Conduct will be reported to the Waverley Borough Council Monitoring Officer for investigation.
- (8) Failure to take appropriate action in respect of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest may also result in a criminal conviction and a fine of up to £5,000 and/or disqualification from office for a period of up to five years.

### General Obligations

2. (1) **You must** always treat others (including member colleagues, officers, other organisations and members of the public) with respect.
- (2) **You must not do** anything which may cause the Council to breach any of the equality enactments (as defined in section 33 of the Equality Act 2010).
- (3) **You must not** conduct yourself in a manner which is contrary to the Council’s duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members.
- (4) **You must not** 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 legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
  - (iv) the disclosure is:
    - (aa) reasonable and in the public interest;
    - (bb) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council; and
    - (cc) you have consulted the Town Clerk or taken other independent legal advice prior to its release.

This particularly includes Haslemere Town Council reports which are exempt, which remain confidential until released by a resolution of Council.

- (5) **You must not** prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.
  - (6) **You 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.
  - (7) **You must not** undertake any action that could be regarded as harassment, intimidation and/or bullying of member colleagues, officers, or members of the public.
3. When using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Council:
- (1) **Do** act in accordance with the Council's reasonable requirements and policies;
  - (2) **Do** ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
  - (3) **Do** have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

#### Gifts and Hospitality

4. (1) **Do** exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a Member.
- (2) **Do not** accept significant gifts or hospitality from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the Council or from persons who may apply to the Council for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.
- (3) **Do** register with the Monitoring Officer any gift with an estimated value of at least £50 or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £100 within 28 days of its receipt.

#### Registration of Interests

5. (1) As a Member of the Council **you must** avoid participating in any decision where you could reasonably be seen as having an interest which compromises your honesty or objectivity. Equally, you should avoid any action which might reasonably lead others to conclude that you were not acting selflessly or with integrity. In order to assist with this and promote openness and accountability, the Waverley Monitoring Officer must, by law, establish and maintain a register of interests, open for inspection by the public at Waverley Borough Council's offices and website, as well as that of Haslemere Town Council.
- (2) **You must** notify the Monitoring Officer of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, or other interests which the Council has decided are appropriate for registration (those listed in paragraph 5(4)). On election, you must do this within 28 days of being elected or appointed to office. Details of disclosable pecuniary interests are set out in the Annex to this Code. You should give sufficient detail of the interests for a member of the public to understand where there might be a conflict of interest.
- (3) **Do** similarly notify the Monitoring Officer of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other interests not already registered within 28 days of your re-election or re-appointment to office. If any of these change you should update your Register of Interests entry promptly.

- (4) **Do** be aware that Disclosable Pecuniary Interests include not only your interests but also the interests of your 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 they were a civil partner, so far as you are aware of the interests of that person. They also apply to any past and reasonably expected future occupational pension, office, trade, profession or vocation as well as present ones.
- (5) **Do** be aware that the Council has decided that it is appropriate for you to register and disclose non-pecuniary interests that arise from your membership of or your occupation of a position of general control or management in the following bodies –
  - (i) bodies to which you have been appointed or nominated by the Council;
  - (ii) bodies exercising functions of a public nature;
  - (iii) bodies directed to charitable purposes;
  - (iv) bodies one of whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy.
- (6) **Sensitive Information** Where a Member of the council has an interest (whether or not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest) and the nature of the interest is such that they, and the Town Clerk, consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the Member (or a person connected to them) being subject to violence or intimidation, then:
  - (a) if the interest is entered in the Register of Interests, copies of the register that are made available for inspection or published on the Council’s website, must not include details of the interest (but may state that the Member has an interest the details of which are withheld under this provision of the Code).
  - (b) where a disclosable pecuniary interest is not entered on the Register of Interests and would otherwise require disclosure at a meeting, the Member shall be entitled to merely disclose at the meeting the fact that they have such an interest in the matter concerned.
- (7) **Removal of entries in the register** An entry in the register of interests will be removed once the person concerned no longer has the interest or is neither a councillor nor a co-opted Member of the council (other than transitorily on re-election or re-appointment).

#### Disclosure of Interests and Participation

6. (1) **Do** disclose to a meeting at which you are present any disclosable pecuniary interest, or other interest which the Council has decided is appropriate for disclosure (see paragraph 5(4) above) as soon as you become aware of it.
- (2) **Do** notify the Monitoring Officer of any interest not already registered that is disclosed to a meeting under paragraph 6(1) above within 28 days of the disclosure.
- (3) **Do not** participate in any discussion, or vote, where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter. **Do** withdraw from the meeting during the consideration of the matter.

- (4) **Do** declare any other non-pecuniary interest(s) that you consider to have sufficient weight so as to undermine your ability to make an open-minded and objective decision. Where this is the case, **do** exclude yourself from consideration of the item by withdrawing from the chamber for the duration of it being discussed.
  - (5) In making a judgement about whether a non-pecuniary interest is of sufficient weight as to undermine your objectivity, you should consider what an ordinary member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would think.
7. Notwithstanding the provisions of Paragraph 5 (1), **you may** participate in any business of the Council where that business relates to the Council's functions in respect of:
- (a) agreeing an allowance, payment or indemnity given to councillors or co-opted members; and
  - (b) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

#### Decision-making and Predetermination

8. (1) Where you have been involved in campaigning in your political role on an issue which does not impact on your personal and/or professional life, you should not be prohibited from participating in a decision in your political role as a Member.
- (2) However, **do not** place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties.
- (3) When making a decision, **do** consider the matter with an open mind and on the facts before the meeting at which the decision is to be made, listening to the advice of relevant parties, including advice from officers, and taking all relevant information into consideration, remaining objective and making decisions on merit. While this is particularly relevant for the Planning and Highways Committee, it also applies to other decision-making.

#### Dispensations

9. (1) A councillor or co-opted member with a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter may submit a written request to the Town Clerk for the grant to a dispensation allowing that councillor or co-opted member to participate in any discussion and/or vote on that matter at a meeting.
- (2) The Town Clerk may, after having had regard to all relevant circumstances, grant a dispensation allowing that councillor or co-opted member only if they consider that without the dispensation:
- (a) the number of persons prohibited from participating in any particular business in relation to the matter would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of that business, or
  - (b) granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the borough, or
  - (c) it is otherwise appropriate to grant the dispensation.
- (3) Any dispensation granted must specify the period for which it has effect, and the period specified may not exceed four years.

## ANNEXE 1 – DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

### 1. Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation

Any employment, occupational pension, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. If your employment relates to any Haslemere service or function you should give full details, including any details of past, present or future contracts with an organisation seeking any permission or licence for The Council.

### 2. Sponsorship

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within the period of 12 months ending with the day on which you give a notification for the purposes of section 30(1) or section 31(7) of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of any expenses incurred in carrying out your duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

### 3. Contracts

Any contract which is made between you (or a body in which you have a beneficial interest) and the Council-

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

### 4. Land and property

Any beneficial interest in land or property which is within the area of the Council. This includes your own home if you own it.

### 5. Licences or Tenancies

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

### 6. Corporate Tenancies

Any tenancy where (to your knowledge)-

(a) the landlord is the Council; and

the tenant is a body in which you have a beneficial interest.

### 7. Securities and Shares

Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where-

(a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the Council; and

(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 you have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

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