

ELDON PARISH COUNCIL

25th July 2017

Recommended Revised Code of Conduct

Report of Clerk

1. Introduction

The current Code of Conduct which governs the actions of members of the Parish Council was adopted by the Council in September 2012. A copy of the current Code is available for inspection on the Parish Council's website.

2. Proposed Amendments to Code

Following discussions between the County Durham Association of Local Councils and Durham County Council's Monitoring Officer, a revised Code of Conduct is being recommended for adoption by Parish and Town Councils in County Durham.

The suggested Code of Conduct now includes disrepute as a Standards measure for councillors. Other proposed additions are shown in italics and underlined in the narrative. The County Council's Monitoring Officer is happy with the proposed changes and has welcomed the addition of disrepute into the revised Code.

3. Recommendation

The Council is asked to consider the Code of Conduct set out below and to determine whether it wishes to adopt the revised Code.

Tom Bolton
Clerk to the Parish Council

County Durham Association of Local Councils **Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils.**

Introduction

Pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011, Eldon 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.

This Code of Conduct is based on the principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Promotion and Maintenance of Standards

A member shall

- familiarise him/herself with the Councils Code of Conduct and any other policies or standing orders of the council which relate to members conduct.
- support the council in the promotion of high standards, and in ensuring access by the public to the Council's records regarding the registration and declaration of member's interests.

Nothing in this Code shall prevent a member from disclosing any other interest if the individual wishes to do so.

Definitions

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.

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.

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.

Member obligations

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.

1. He/she shall behave in such a way that a reasonable person would regard as respectful.
2. He/she shall not act in a way which a reasonable person would regard as bullying or intimidatory.
3. He/she shall not behave in a manner which a reasonable person would regard as likely to bring the Council, or his/her office as a member of the Council into disrepute.
4. He/she shall not seek to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
5. He/she shall use the resources of the Council in accordance with its requirements.
6. He/she shall not disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.
7. He/She will be required to declare an interest at the meeting, even though that interest may already appear on their Register of Interests. This is to make fellow-members, the press and the public aware of a member's interest, if that member does not articulate it when the council are discussing a relevant matter which affects that interest.

Registration of interests

8. Within 28 days of this Code being adopted by the Council, or the member's election or the co-opted member's appointment (where that is later), he/she shall register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in Appendices A and B.
9. Upon the re-election of a member or the re-appointment of a co-opted member, he/she shall within 28 days re-register with the Monitoring Officer any interests in Appendices A and B.
10. A member shall register with the Monitoring Officer any change to interests or new interests (*including sensitive interests*) in Appendices A and B within 28 days of becoming aware of it.

A member need only declare the existence but not the details of any interest which the Monitoring Officer 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.

Failure without reasonable excuse to register a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Appendix A Interest) is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011 as well as a breach of the Code

Declaration of interests at meetings

11. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix A the member shall
 - Declare what his/her interests are;
 - not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter (Localism Act s31(4) .
 - If the councils Standing Orders dictate the member shall leave the room while the matter is being discussed and voted on.

If it is an interest which has not already been disclosed to the Monitoring Officer, the member shall disclose the nature of it and let the Monitoring Officer know of the existence of a new interest within 28 days.

12. Subject to the above, where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix A which is a sensitive interest, the member shall
 - Declare an interest but not the nature of it
 - not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter (Localism Act s31(4)
 - If the councils Standing Orders dictate the member shall leave the room while the matter is being discussed and voted on.

If it is a sensitive interest which has not already been disclosed to the Monitoring Officer, the member shall disclose he/she has an interest but not the nature of it and let the Monitoring Officer know of the existence of a new sensitive interest within 28 days.

13. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix B, the member shall

- Declare what his/her interests are
- He/she may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.
- not vote on the matter.
- If the councils Standing Orders dictate once the member has spoken they shall leave the room while the matter is being discussed and voted on.

If he/she holds an interest in Appendix B which is a sensitive interest not already disclosed to the Monitoring Officer, he/she shall declare the interest but not the nature of the interest.

14. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to a financial interest of a friend, relative or close associate (other than an interest of a person in Appendix A), the member shall

- disclose the nature of the interest.
- He/she may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.
- not vote on the matter.
- If the councils Standing Orders dictate once the member has spoken they shall leave the room while the matter is being discussed and voted on.

Dispensations

15. On a written request made to the Council's proper officer, prior to the relevant item being discussed 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 in Appendices A and B 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.

Appendix A Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Interests defined by regulations made under section 30 (3) of the Localism Act 2011 and described in the table below. They include interests which are held by the member; his/her spouse or civil partner, a person with who he/she is living as husband and wife; or a person with whom he/she is living as if they are civil partners, and the member is aware that the other person has the interest.

Interests described in the table below.

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain by the member or by his/her spouse or civil partner or by the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made to the member during the 12 month period ending on the latest date referred to in paragraph 6 above for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a member, or towards his/her 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.
Contracts	Any contract made between the member or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the 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 held by the member or by his/her spouse or civil partner or by the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partner which is within the area of the Council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the member or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) held by the member or by his/her spouse or civil partner or by the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners to occupy land in the area of the Council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the member's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the Council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the member, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest held by the member or by his/her spouse or civil partner or by the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the member's 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 the member, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

*'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

**'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Appendix B

An interest which relates to or is likely to affect:

- (i) any body of which the member is in a position of general control or management and to which he/she is appointed or nominated by the Council but only when the item under discussion involves potential funding or transfer of assets from the Council to that body.
- (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 the member of the Council is a member or in a position of general control or management;

- (iii) any gifts or hospitality worth more than an estimated value of £50 which the member has received by virtue of his or her office.