



**HOLME VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

# **Kirklees Code of Conduct for Members**

**Revised December 2021.**

## **REVISIONS**

**Adopted by Holme Valley Parish Council 31-01-2022**

**2223/12 APPROVED Annual Council 16-05-2022**

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## Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct: -

-“Councillor” means a Member or Co-opted Member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor.

A “co-opted member” is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as “a person who is not a member of the authority but who:

- a) is a Member of any Committee or Sub-committee of the authority, or;
- b) is a Member of, and represents the authority on, any joint Committee or joint Sub-committee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that Committee or Sub-committee”.

-“local authority” includes County Councils, District Councils, London Borough Councils, Parish Councils, Town Councils, Fire and Rescue authorities, Police authorities, Joint authorities, Economic Prosperity Boards, Combined authorities and National Park authorities.

-“meeting” means any meeting of:

- o the authority;
- o the Executive of the authority
- o any of the authority’s or its Executive’s committees, Sub-committees, joint Committees or joint Sub-committees.

-“body” means any body of which you are a Member or in a position of general control and management and:

- o to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority, or
- o which is a body
  - exercising functions of a public nature or
  - directed to charitable purposes or
  - one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy.

-“relevant person” means any person with whom you have a family, social or business relationship.



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## **Purpose of the Code of Conduct**

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a Councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow Councillors, Kirklees officers and the reputation of Kirklees Council. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all Councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of Councillor and local government.

## **General Principles of Councillor Conduct**

The Principles of Public Life apply to everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including Ministers, Civil Servants, Councillors and local authority officers should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles.

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of Councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of Councillor. I promote these principles and will challenge poor behaviour where it occurs.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest and act solely in terms of the public interest
- I understand that I am accountable to the public for my decisions and actions and will submit myself to scrutiny
- I will act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner and will not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and



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- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

### **Application of the Code of Conduct**

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of Councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted Member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a Councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a Councillor which may include when:

- you are at meetings of the authority
- you are acting as a representative of the authority
- you are taking any decision as a Cabinet member or Ward Councillor
- you are discharging your functions as a Ward Councillor
- you are at briefing meetings with officers and at site visits
- you are corresponding with the authority other than in a private capacity
- you misuse your position as a Councillor
- your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a Councillor.

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

Where you act as a representative of your authority on another local authority you must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority's Code of Conduct.



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Where you act as a representative of your authority on a body which is not another local authority you must, when acting for that other body, comply with this Code, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a Councillor.

The Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and Parish Councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.

## Standards of Councillor Conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

## General Conduct

### 1. Respect

#### As a Councillor:

**1.1 I treat other Councillors and members of the public with respect.**

**1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.**

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a Councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack. In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in Councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or



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interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the Police.

This also applies to fellow Councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's Councillor/Officer Protocol.

## 2. Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

**As a councillor:**

**2.1 I do not bully any person.**

**2.2 I do not harass any person.**

**2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.**

**2.4 I will not do anything which may cause the Council to breach any of its equality duties.**

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

## 3. Impartiality of Officers of the Council

**As a Councillor:**



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### **3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.**

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

## **4. Confidentiality and Access to Information**

**As a Councillor:**

### **4.1 I do not disclose information:**

**a. given to me in confidence by anyone**

**b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless**

- i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;**
- ii. I am 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:**
  - 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and**
  - 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and**
  - 3. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.**

**4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a Councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.**

**4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.**

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.



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## 5. Disrepute

As a Councillor:

**5.2 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.**

**5.3 I do not conduct myself in a manner which is contrary to the Council's duty to promote and maintain high standards of behaviour.**

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other Councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/it's functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow Councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the Council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

## 6. Use of position

As a Councillor:

**6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.**

Your position as a Member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

## 7. Behaviours

As a Councillor:

**7.1 I will comply with the standards outlined in the Council's behaviours, in particular the Member / Officer Protocol.**

There may be policies and guidance related to standards of appropriate behaviour and responsibilities agreed and issued from time to time which you will be expected to have regard to.





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## 8. Use of Local Authority Resources and Facilities

**As a Councillor:**

**8.1 I do not misuse Council resources.**

**8.2 I will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:**

- a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements
- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed; and
- c. have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a Councillor. Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers
- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a Councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

## 9. Media and Public Speaking

**As a Councillor:**

**9.1 I will be clear when communicating with the media or speaking in public that I do not give the impression that I am acting in an official capacity when I am not.**

It is important that you do not do or say anything that might mislead members of the public into believing that you are speaking on behalf of the Council or that your views represent an official Council position when it is your own personal or political view.



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## 10. Attendance at Meetings

### As a Councillor

**10.1 I will comply with the rules and procedures of meetings I attend.**

**10.2 I will comply with the Council's Standing Orders and the rulings of the Chair.**

## 11. Decision Making As a Councillor

**11.1 When reaching decisions on any matter I will have regard to any relevant advice from: a. The Chief Finance Officer (statutory S.151 officer); b. The Monitoring Officer (Service Director of Legal, Governance and Commissioning) where she is acting pursuant to her statutory duties.**

## 12. Complying with the Code of Conduct

### As a Councillor:

**12.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.**

**12.2 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.**

**12.3 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.**

**12.4 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.**

It is extremely important for you as a Councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with the Monitoring Officer.

## Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

## 13. Interests



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## As a Councillor:

### 13.1 I register and disclose my interests.

### 13.2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (“DPIs”) are those interests defined as such in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (“the 2012 Regulations”) or in any subsequent regulations which amend, vary or revoke the 2012 Regulations. For the purposes of illustration only, a summary of the 2012 Regulations is set out in the Schedule to this Code of Conduct.

I will, within 28 days of:

adoption of this Code of Conduct by the authority; or

taking office as a Member or co-opted Member of the authority notify the authority’s Monitoring Officer of any DPI, where the pecuniary interest is mine, my spouse’s or civil partner’s, or is the pecuniary interest of somebody whom I am living with as a husband or wife, or as if we were civil partners.

When I am present at a meeting of the authority and I have a DPI in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting, and where the matter does not relate to ‘sensitive information’ as defined below, I will disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting.

Following any disclosure of a DPI not on the authority’s register or the subject of pending notification, I will notify the authority’s Monitoring Officer of that interest within 28 days beginning with the date of disclosure.

Unless a dispensation has been granted, I will not participate in any discussion of, vote on, or discharge any function related to any matter in which I have a DPI and will withdraw from the meeting while the matter is under consideration.

I will within 28 days of becoming aware of any new DPI or the need to change or update a current DPI registration, notify the authority’s Monitoring Officer of those new or revised register entries.

### 13.3 Interests which are not Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (Other Interests)

In addition to the requirements relating to DPIs, if I attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and I am aware that I have an interest which does not amount to a DPI I will make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.



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I will have an Other interest where –

(a) a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of me or a member of my family or a person or an organisation with whom I have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which I have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or

(b) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of my family (other than a partner) or a person with whom I have a close association.

In such circumstances I will consider whether my continued participation in the matter relating to my interest would be reasonable in the circumstances, particularly if the interest may give rise to a perception of a conflict of interests in the matter under discussion.

I will not have an Other interest if the interest relates to any business of the authority in respect of –

- housing, where I am a tenant of your authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to my tenancy or lease;
- school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where I am a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or am a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
- statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where I am in receipt of, or am entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
- an allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
- any ceremonial honour given to members; and
- setting Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

### 13.4 Sensitive Interests

Where I have an interest which is not a disclosable pecuniary interest and information relating to the interest is sensitive information, I will indicate to the meeting that I have an interest, the details of which are withheld.

### 13.5 Sensitive Information

Where I consider that the information relating to any of my interests is sensitive information, and the Monitoring Officer agrees, I will not include that information when registering that interest. I will, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change of circumstances which means that information excluded is no longer sensitive information, notify the Monitoring Officer asking that the information be included in the register of members' interests. In this Code, "sensitive information"



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means information whose availability for inspection by the public creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that I or a person connected with me may be subjected to violence or intimidation.

### 14. Gifts and Hospitality

#### As a Councillor:

**14.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.**

**14.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25 within 28 days of its receipt.**

**14.3 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gifts from the same source that exceed a cumulative total of £100 in any year.**

**14.4 I register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.**

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a Councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance. Updated December



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

#### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

#### **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 disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

#### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful. 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.



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## **Appendix B - Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

### **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 Council) made to the Councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a Councillor, 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 Councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the Councillor 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 and Property**

Any beneficial interest in land 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 Councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the Councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.

### **Licenses**

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

### **Corporate Tenancies**



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Any tenancy where (to the Councillor's knowledge) - (a) the landlord is the Council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the Councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the Councillor 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 in securities\* of a body where –

(a) that body (to the Councillor'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 Councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the Councillor 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 C: Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You must register as an Other Registerable Interest :

- a) any unpaid directorships;
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority ;
- c) any body
  - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
  - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or





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(iii) 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.

ENDS.