

UFFINGTON PARISH COUNCIL ('the Council')

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. This code of conduct is adopted pursuant to the Council's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members¹ of the Council.
2. This code applies to you as a member or co-opted member of this Council when you act in that role and it is your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this code.

Selflessness

3. You must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself.

Objectivity

4. In carrying out public business you must make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

Accountability

5. You are accountable for your decisions and actions to the public and must submit yourself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to your office.

Openness

6. You must be as open as possible about your actions and those of your council, and must be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

Honesty and Integrity

7. You must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned, must not behave improperly and must on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

Leadership

8. You must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving in your public post, in particular as characterised by the above requirements, by leadership and example in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

General Obligations

9. You must treat others with respect and ensure that you are aware of and comply with all legal obligations that apply to you as a member or co-opted member of the Council and act within the law;
10. You must not bully any person.

¹ A "co-opted member" for the purpose of this code is, as defined in the Localism Act section 27 (4) "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 that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub committee".

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11. You must not do anything that compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of the Council.
12. You must not disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you of which you are aware, 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:
 - a) reasonable and in the public interest;
 - b) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council.
13. You must not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of your role as a member for your own personal advantage.
14. When making decisions on behalf of or as part of the Council you must have regard to any professional advice provided to you by the Council's officers.
15. When using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Council:
 - (i) you must act in accordance with the Council's reasonable requirements;
 - (ii) you must make sure that you do not use resources improperly for political purposes and do not use them at all for party political purposes.

Registering and Declaring Interests

16. You must, within 28 days of taking office as a member or co-opted member, notify the Council's monitoring officer of any disclosable pecuniary interest as defined by regulations made by the Secretary of State, where the pecuniary interest is yours, your spouse's or civil partner's, or is the pecuniary interest of somebody with whom you are living with as a husband or wife, or as if you were civil partners.
17. You must disclose the interest at any meeting of the Council at which you are present, where you have a disclosable interest in any matter being considered and where the matter is not a 'sensitive interest'².
18. Following any disclosure of an interest not on the Council's register or the subject of pending notification, you must notify the monitoring officer of the interest within 28 days beginning with the date of disclosure.
19. Unless dispensation has been granted, you may not participate in any discussion of, vote on, or discharge any function related to any matter in which you have a pecuniary interest as defined by regulations made by the Secretary of State. You must withdraw from the room or chamber when the meeting discusses and votes on the matter.

² A "sensitive interest" is described in the Localism Act 2011 as a member or co-opted member of a council having an interest, and the nature of the interest being such that the member or co-opted member, and the council's monitoring officer, consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation.

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20. Contacting the Council

- a. Members of the public may contact directly Councillors in various ways: in person, by telephone, by email, by letter. They may also contact the Council via the Clerk in any of the above ways and also by sending a message via the website.
- b. The flowchart at appendix 1 shows the process to be followed on receipt of a message or request from a member of the public.
- c. Any request for information or other message from any member of the public should be dealt with promptly and courteously.
- d. If a Councillor is contacted verbally they should avoid being drawn into a discussion on the matter raised; instead they should ask the member of the public to put their request/issue in writing, unless it is something simple, such as 'can I request that you cut the grass'
- e. If a Councillor is contacted by email they should always acknowledge it, copy to the Clerk. The request/message should then be processed as per the appendix.
- f. If a Councillor receives a letter it should always be given to the Clerk, who, as Proper Officer to the Council, will respond officially once the appropriate action has been taken.

21. Meeting Members of the Public

- a. Councillors should never meet members of the public alone; there should always be at least two people present. During the meeting Councillors should always abide by the Code of Conduct.
- b. If you find yourself caught 'in the street', you should avoid being drawn into a discussion, but politely request that the member of the public contacts the Council through the proper channels.
- c. If the meeting is likely to be contentious you should consider recording it. You must, of course, inform the member(s) of the public that you will be doing so. Alternatively, ask the Clerk to attend the meeting and take minutes.
- d. Councillors should never make decisions or promise actions that require expenditure at such a meeting. They should bring the matter to the next Council meeting. If the matter is urgent, an extraordinary meeting should be called.
- e. When dealing with Council business you are *always* a Councillor. You cannot say 'I was not acting as a Councillor at the time'. When asked about Council business you are *still* a Councillor and **MUST** always abide by the Code of Conduct. A common example is when someone asks about a planning application when you are having a pint in the pub.

Appendix: Flowchart

Last updated: December 2019

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