

# Wadhurst Parish Council code of conduct

## Introduction

Pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011, Wadhurst Parish Council has adopted this Code of Conduct to promote and maintain high standards of behavior 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.

**Selflessness** - Members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

**Integrity** - Members 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.

**Objectivity** - Members should make decisions in accordance with the law and on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

**Accountability** - Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

**Openness** - Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

**Honesty** - Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty may be questioned, should not behave dishonestly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behavior. Members should declare any private interests relating to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**Leadership** - Members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence

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If you need guidance on any matter under this Code you should seek it from the Parish Clerk or your own legal adviser – it is entirely your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code.

## 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.

The authority refers to Wadhurst Parish 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. (Note: Bullying may be characterized as: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Harassment may be characterized 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.)
3. He/she shall not seek to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
4. He/she do anything to Intimidate, or improperly influence, or attempt to intimidate, or improperly influence any person who 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 authority'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, the authority.

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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 bylaw.
7. He/she must not do anything which may cause your authority to breach any of its the equality duties (in particular as set out in the Equality Act 2010)
8. He/she must when reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by— (a) The Parish Clerk (b) The Responsible Finance Officer where that officer is acting pursuant to his or her statutory duties You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your authority

### Registration of interests

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. A member shall register with the Monitoring Officer any change to interests or new interests in Appendices A and B within 28 days of becoming aware of it.
12. 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.
13. It is a criminal offence to fail to notify the Parish Clerk of a disclosable pecuniary interest, to take part in discussions or votes at meetings, or to take a decision where you have disclosable pecuniary interest, without reasonable excuse. It is also an offence to knowingly or recklessly to provide false or misleading information to the Parish Clerk
14. Any written allegation received by the authority that you have failed to comply with this Code will be dealt with by the authority under the arrangements which it has adopted for such purposes. If it is found that you have failed to comply with the Code, the authority has 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.

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15. 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.

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

### **Declaration of interests at meetings**

16. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix A the member shall not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter. He/she only has to declare what his/her interest is if it is not already entered in the member's register of interests or if he/she has not notified the Monitoring Officer of it.
17. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix A which is a sensitive interest, the member shall not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter. 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.
18. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix B, the member shall not vote on the matter. He/she may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.
19. A member only has to declare his/her interest in Appendix B if it is not already entered in his/her register of interests or he/she has not notified the Monitoring Officer of it or if he/she speaks on the matter. 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.
20. 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 and not vote on the matter. He/she may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. If it is a 'sensitive interest' the member shall declare the interest but not the nature of the interest.

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## Dispensations

21. On a written request made to the Council's proper officer, 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.

## Scope and offences

22. Councillors must comply with this Code whenever they act or appear to act in an official capacity, namely when:
  - (a) conduct the business of the authority (including the business of the office to which they are elected or appointed); or
  - (b) act, claim to act or give the impression they are acting as a representative of the authority,
23. Where they act as a representative of the authority:
  - (a) on another authority, they must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority's code of conduct; or
  - b) on any other body, they must, when acting for that other body, comply with the authority's code of conduct, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

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## Appendix A

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 Labor Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	<p>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 –</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	<p>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.</p> <p>'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.</p>

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Licenses	Any license (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.

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## 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;
- (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.



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## **Non-exhaustive Examples of Bullying and Harassment**

With reference to paragraph 2 & 4 of this Code –

### **Examples of bullying behavior include, without limitation:**

- spreading malicious rumors, or insulting someone by word or behavior
- ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- exclusion or victimization
- unfair treatment
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close,
- display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favors, making decision on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected.
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading or constant criticism
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- invading someone's personal space
- speaking to someone in an overbearing manner
- using aggressive body language • undermining or belittling someone

### **Examples of harassment include, without limitation:**

- making abusive, derogatory, patronizing, suggestive or sexualized comments or sounds
- making offensive jokes or insulting gestures or facial expressions
- ridicule

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- offensive e-mails, tweets or comments on social networking sites
- trolling via social networking sites • threats of aggression or intimidation
- making false and malicious assertions
- intrusive questioning about private matters
- display of offensive material
- unwanted comments on dress or appearance