

Ipstones Parish Council

Member Code of Conduct



Adoption and review

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Related documents: Standing Orders; Register of Members' Interests; Gifts and Hospitality Register; Member–Officer Protocol; Dignity at Work / Bullying & Harassment Policy.

1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 This Code of Conduct (“the Code”) is adopted by Ipstones Parish Council (“the Council”) pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011. It applies to all members and co-opted members (“members”) of the Council.

1.2 The Code promotes and maintains high standards of behaviour when members conduct the business of the Council, including when they act, claim to act, or give the impression of acting as a representative of the Council.

1.3 This Code is underpinned by the Seven Principles of Public Life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership) and is intended to protect the public, the Council, fellow members and officers, and the reputation of local government.

2. Definitions and application

2.1 For the purposes of this Code:

- **Member** includes a councillor and a co-opted member who is entitled to vote on any question at a meeting of a committee or sub-committee.
- **Meeting** means any meeting of the Council or any of its committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees, whether formal or informal, including briefing meetings or site visits arranged by or on behalf of the Council.
- **Officer** means the Council's employees, including the Clerk/RFO, and any contractor providing services to the Council.
- **Monitoring Officer** means the Monitoring Officer of the principal authority responsible for standards arrangements in the Council's area.

2.2 You must comply with this Code whenever you are acting in your capacity as a member of the Council or giving the impression that you are doing so. This includes (but is not limited to) when you:

- attend meetings or undertake Council business;
- represent the Council to external bodies;
- make decisions, or participate in decision-making;
- communicate with the public, other members, or officers about Council business (including by email and on social media);
- use Council resources (including Council IT systems and Council-owned devices); or
- carry out site visits or inspections arranged by or on behalf of the Council.

2.3 The Code does not seek to regulate your purely private conduct. However, your conduct in a private capacity may still be relevant where it could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or the Council into disrepute.

2.4 You must also comply with all relevant laws and the Council's adopted policies, including (where applicable) standing orders, financial regulations, data protection and information security requirements, and equality duties.

3. General principles and expected standards

3.1 In accordance with the public trust placed in you, you must on all occasions:

- act with integrity and honesty;
- act lawfully;
- treat all persons fairly and with respect;
- lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of member;
- exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- use Council resources prudently and in accordance with the Council's requirements.

4. Respect, civility, bullying, harassment and discrimination

4.1 You must treat others with respect. You must not use, or cause to be used, disrespectful, rude, offensive, abusive, intimidating or threatening behaviour, language or tone.

4.2 You must not bully, harass, victimise or discriminate against any person. This includes (without limitation) conduct related to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

4.3 You may robustly challenge ideas and policies, but you must do so in a way that is civil, proportionate and focused on the issue rather than the person. The same standards apply to conduct online and on social media.

4.4 You should support a working environment where members and officers can undertake their roles without intimidation, abuse, bullying or threats. Where you experience or witness unacceptable behaviour, you should raise it promptly with the Chair and/or the Clerk.

5. Working with officers and others

5.1 You must respect the role of officers and contractors, who are employed by and serve the Council as a whole. You must not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for or on behalf of the Council.

5.2 You must not use your position improperly to direct officers or contractors, or to seek preferential treatment. You must not instruct officers to act unlawfully or contrary to Council policy.

5.3 Any concerns about an officer's conduct or performance must be raised through the appropriate procedure (normally via the Clerk and/or Chair) and not through public criticism, personal attack or social media.

6. Confidentiality and information governance

6.1 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:

- you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;
- you are required by law to do so;
- the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice (and the third party agrees to keep the information confidential); or

- there is a clear, lawful and overriding public interest in disclosure, and you have first sought advice from the Clerk and/or Monitoring Officer where practicable.

6.2 You must handle information securely and in line with data protection law. You must not misuse personal data, and you must take reasonable steps to prevent accidental loss or unauthorised access to Council information.

6.3 You must not disclose the substance of confidential items considered in a closed session unless and until the Council lawfully resolves to make the information public.

7. Use of position, decision-making and Council resources

7.1 You must not use, or attempt to use, your position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person (including yourself) or to secure or attempt to secure the award of any contract, grant, permission or other benefit for yourself or others.

7.2 When taking decisions or participating in decision-making you must exercise independent judgement, having regard to relevant considerations, and taking appropriate advice (including officer advice) where needed.

7.3 You must use Council resources (including staff time, funds, premises, equipment, information and IT) only in accordance with the Council's requirements and for Council business, unless proper authorisation exists for incidental use.

7.4 You must not behave in a way which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or the Council into disrepute.

8. Gifts and hospitality

8.1 You must not accept any gift or hospitality which could reasonably be seen as placing you under an improper obligation, or which might reasonably be regarded as influencing your actions as a member.

8.2 You must register any gift or hospitality offered to you in connection with your role as a member where its estimated value is £[THRESHOLD] or more (including any cumulative offers from the same source), whether accepted or refused, within 28 days of the offer. The register is maintained by the Clerk.

9. Interests: registration and disclosure

9.1 You must avoid conflicts of interest and comply with statutory requirements relating to the registration and disclosure of interests, including disclosable pecuniary interests (“DPIs”) under the Localism Act 2011 and associated regulations.

9.2 Within 28 days of election, co-option, or adoption of this Code (whichever is later), you must notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of your DPIs and any other interests required by the Monitoring Officer’s register of interests form. You must notify the Monitoring Officer in writing within 28 days of becoming aware of any change to those interests.

9.3 You must disclose at a meeting (or when taking a decision) any interest where the matter being considered affects or relates to that interest, in accordance with the Council’s procedures and the law.

9.4 Where you have a DPI in any matter being considered at a meeting, you must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter, and you must withdraw from the room (or meeting) while the matter is being considered, unless a lawful dispensation has been granted.

9.5 You should seek advice from the Clerk or Monitoring Officer if you are uncertain whether you have an interest that must be registered or disclosed, or what action you must take at a meeting.

10. Dispensations

10.1 The Council may grant a dispensation to enable you to participate in discussion and/or vote where you would otherwise be prohibited from doing so because of an interest, in accordance with the law and the Council’s adopted procedure.

10.2 Requests for dispensations must be made in writing to the Clerk, setting out the relevant interest and the reasons a dispensation is sought. Any dispensation granted will be recorded in writing, may be subject to conditions, and will be time-limited.

11. Complaints and enforcement

11.1 Allegations that a member has failed to comply with this Code will be dealt with under the standards arrangements of the relevant principal authority, through its Monitoring Officer.

11.2 A complaint must be made in writing to the Monitoring Officer using the principal authority’s complaints process. Details of how to complain will be published on the principal authority’s website and/or the Council’s website.

11.3 You must cooperate with any investigation or determination into an alleged breach of this Code.

12. Review, training and publication

12.1 The Council will publish this Code and will keep it under review. Members are expected to familiarise themselves with this Code and to attend relevant training as required by the Council.

Appendix A: The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)

1. **Selflessness** – act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. **Integrity** – avoid placing yourself under any obligation that might influence you in the performance of your duties.
3. **Objectivity** – act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit.
4. **Accountability** – be accountable to the public for your decisions and actions.
5. **Openness** – act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.
6. **Honesty** – be truthful.
7. **Leadership** – lead by example and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) – summary

DPIs are defined in regulations made under the Localism Act 2011. In summary, a DPI is an interest of you, or of your spouse/civil partner or person with whom you are living as if you were spouses/civil partners, of which you are aware, that falls within one or more of the categories below.

- **Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation** – any employment or business carried on for profit or gain.
- **Sponsorship** – any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided in the previous 12 months in respect of your election or any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties.
- **Contracts** – any contract between you (or your spouse/partner) and the Council under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed, and which has not been fully discharged.
- **Land** – any beneficial interest in land within the Council's area.
- **Licences** – any licence to occupy land in the Council's area for a month or longer.
- **Corporate tenancies** – any tenancy where the Council is landlord and a body in which you (or your spouse/partner) have a beneficial interest is the tenant.

- **Securities** – any beneficial interest in securities of a body where that body has a place of business or land in the Council’s area and the total nominal value exceeds £25,000 or 1% of the issued share capital (whichever is the lower).

Appendix C: Gifts and hospitality register (template)

Date offered	Name of member	Gift / hospitality (description)	Estimated value	Offered by (name/organisation)	Accepted / refused	Reason / notes	Date registered