

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Code of Conduct for Members

1 Application

This Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you are acting in your capacity as a member of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, including –

- 1.1 at formal meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees, its Cabinet and Cabinet Committees
- 1.2 when acting as a representative of the authority
- 1.3 in taking any decision as a Cabinet member or a Ward Councillor
- 1.4 in discharging your functions as a ward Councillor
- 1.5 at briefing meetings with officers and
- 1.6 at site visits
- 1.7 when corresponding with the authority other than in a private capacity

2 General Conduct

You must –

- 2.1 provide leadership to the authority and communities within its area, by personal example and
- 2.2 respect others and not bully (including any unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended) any person
- 2.3 recognise that officers (other than political assistants) are employed by and serve the whole authority
- 2.4 respect the confidentiality of information which you receive as a member –
 - 2.4.1 not disclosing confidential information to third parties unless required by law to do so or where there is a clear and over-riding public interest in doing so; and
 - 2.4.2 not obstructing third parties' legal rights of access to information
- 2.5 not misconduct yourself in a manner which is likely to bring the authority into disrepute
- 2.6 use your position as a member in the public interest and not for personal advantage
- 2.7 accord with the authority's reasonable rules on the use of public resources for private and political purposes
- 2.8 exercise your own independent judgement, taking decisions for good and substantial reasons –
 - 2.8.1 attaching appropriate weight to all relevant considerations including, where appropriate, public opinion and the views of political groups
 - 2.8.2 paying due regard to the advice of officers, and in particular to the advice of the statutory officers, namely the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer and
 - 2.8.3 stating the reasons for your decisions where those reasons are not otherwise apparent
- 2.9 account for your actions, particularly by supporting the authority's scrutiny function
- 2.10 ensure that the authority acts within the law.

- 2.11 Co-operate fully with any investigation carried out in accordance with the Council's Arrangements for dealing with Standards Complaints under the Localism Act 2011, and by not making any trivial or malicious allegations under those Arrangements.

3 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

You must -

- 3.1 comply with the statutory requirements to register, disclose and withdraw from participating in respect of any matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest
- 3.2 ensure that your register of interests is kept up to date and notify the Monitoring Officer in writing within 28 days of becoming aware of any change in respect of your disclosable pecuniary interests
- 3.3 make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent, and leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion or voting takes place.
- 3.4 "Meeting" means any meeting organised by or on behalf of the authority, including –
- 3.4.1 any meeting of the Council, or a Committee or Sub-Committee of Council
 - 3.4.2 any meeting of the Cabinet and any Committee of the Cabinet
 - 3.4.3 in taking a decision as a Ward Councillor or as a Member of the Cabinet
 - 3.4.4 at any briefing by officers; and
 - 3.4.5 at any site visit to do with business of the authority

4 Other Interests

- 4.1 In addition to the requirements of Paragraph 3, if you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered, and you are aware that you have an interest in that item which may or may not be entered in your register of interests, you must make 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.
- 4.2 You have an interest, as referred to at 4.1 above, in an item of business of your authority where –
- 4.2.1 a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you 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 you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or
 - 4.2.2 it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests listed in the Table in the Appendix to this Code, but in respect of a member of your family (other than a "relevant person") or a person with whom you have a close association, or
 - 4.2.3 it relates to an interest (other than a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest) entered in your register of interests,
- and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.
- 4.3 Where you have an interest in accordance with 4.1 and 4.2 above then you must consider whether the nature of that interest is so significant that you should withdraw from participating in respect of the matter relating to that interest. In making this decision you should ask the following question:

Would a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts believe that it would affect your judgment of the wider public interest?

5 Gifts and Hospitality

- 5.1 You must, within 28 days of receipt, notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of any gift, benefit or hospitality with a value in excess of £25 which you have accepted as a member from any person or body other than the authority.
- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer will place your notification on a public register of gifts and hospitality.
- 5.3 This duty to notify the Monitoring Officer does not apply where the gift, benefit or hospitality comes within any description approved by the authority for this purpose.

Appendix

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The duties to register, disclose and not to participate in respect of any matter in which a member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest are set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 as follows –

| <i>Interest</i> | <i>Prescribed description</i> |
|---|--|
| 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 relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by M in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of M. 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 which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority— (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 which is within the area of the relevant authority. |
| Licences | Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer. |
| Corporate tenancies | Any tenancy where (to M's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest. |
| Securities | Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where— (a) that body (to M's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; 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 relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

For this purpose –

“the Act” means the Localism Act 2011;

“body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest” means a firm in which the relevant person is a partner or a body corporate of which the relevant person is a director, or in the securities of which the relevant person has a beneficial interest;

“director” includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society;

“land” excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for the relevant person (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income;

“M” means a member of a relevant authority;

“member” includes a co-opted member;

“relevant authority” means the authority of which M is a member;

“relevant period” means the period of 12 months ending with the day on which M gives a notification for the purposes of section 30(1) or 31(7), as the case may be, of the Act;

“relevant person” means M or any other person referred to in section 30(3)(b) of the Act;

“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.