

BENWICK PARISH COUNCIL



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

APPROVED & ACCEPTED BY BENWICK PARISH COUNCIL 04.09.12,
ITEM 095/12 (A).

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The Members' Code of Conduct is intended to promote high standards of behaviour amongst the elected and co-opted members of the council.

The Code is underpinned by the following principles of public life which should borne in mind when interpreting the meaning of the Code:-

- i **Selflessness** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- ii **Integrity** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- iii **Objectivity** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- iv **Accountability** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- v **Openness** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- vi **Honesty** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- vii **Leadership** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

PART 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Introduction and interpretation

- 1.1. This Code applies to **you** as a member of Fenland District Council (Fenland).
- 1.2. The term “**the Authority**” used in this Code refers to Fenland.
- 1.3. “**Member**” means any person being an elected or co-opted member of the Authority.
- 1.4. It is **your** responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code.
- 1.5. In this Code –

“**Meeting**” means any meeting of:-

- a) The Authority;
 - b) Any meetings with the Council's officers;
 - c) Any of the Authority's Committees, sub-committees, joint committees, joint sub-committees, or area committees;
 - d) Any site visits to do the business of the Authority;
 - e) Any of the Authority's advisory groups and, working parties and panels.
- 1.6. In this Code “relevant authority” has the meaning given to it by section 27(6) of the Localism Act 2011.

2. Scope

- 2.1. You must comply with this Code whenever you act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting in your official capacity as a Member of the Authority.
- 2.2. Where you act as a representative of the Authority:-
 - (a) on another relevant authority, you must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority's code of conduct; or
 - (b) on any other body, you must, when acting for that other body, comply with your authority's code of conduct, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

3. General obligations

- 3.1. You must treat others with respect.

- 3.2. You must not:-
- (a) do anything, which may cause the Authority to breach UK equalities legislation.
 - (b) bully any person.
 - (c) intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or 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.
 - (d) do anything, which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Authority.
 - (e) conduct yourself in a manner, which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.

4. You must not:-

- 4.1. 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:-

- (a) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;
- (b) you are required by law to do so;
- (c) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
- (d) the disclosure is:-
 - (i) reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - (ii) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority.

- 4.2. prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

5. You must not: use or attempt to use your position as a member improperly to confer on, or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage.

6. You must:-

- 6.1. when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Authority:-
- (a) act in accordance with your Authority's reasonable requirements;
 - (b) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and

- 6.2. have regard to any Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

PART 2 INTERESTS

7. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

- 7.1. Breaches of the rules relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests may lead to criminal sanctions.
- 7.2. You have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest if it is of a description specified in Regulations made by the Secretary of State (Appendix A) and either:
- (a) it is an interest of yours, or
 - (b) it is an interest of:
 - (i) your spouse or civil partner,
 - (ii) a person with whom you are living as husband and wife, or
 - (iii) a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners,
- and you are aware that that other person has the interest.

8. Registration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

- 8.1. Subject to paragraph 12 (sensitive interests), **you must**, within 28 days of:
- (a) this Code being adopted or applied by the Authority; or
 - (b) your election or appointment (where that is later),
notify the Authority's Monitoring Officer in writing of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests you have at that time.
- 8.2. Subject to paragraph 12 (sensitive interests), **you must**, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or any change to any such interest, notify the Authority's Monitoring Officer in writing of that new Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or change.

9. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in matters considered at meetings

- 9.1. If you attend a meeting and have and are aware that you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered, or being considered, at that meeting, –
- (a) **you must disclose** to the meeting the fact that you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in that matter. **If you have not already done so, you must notify the Authority's Monitoring Officer** of the interest before the end of 28 days beginning with the date of the disclosure, and
 - (b) whether the interest is registered or not you **must not** – unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Authority's Monitoring Officer –
 - (i) participate, or participate further, in any discussion of the matter or vote at the meeting; or
 - (ii) remain in the meeting room whilst the matter is being debated or participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

Note: Council Procedure Rule 13 requires you to leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion or voting takes place.

10. Other Interests

- 10.1. 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 a "non-pecuniary interest" in that item, 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
- 10.2. You have a "non-pecuniary interest" in an item of business of your authority where -
- (a) 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
 - (b) 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 and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

12. Sensitive interests

- 12.1 Where you consider (and the Authority's Monitoring Officer agrees) that the nature of a Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interest is such that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to you or a person connected with you being subject to intimidation or violence, it is a "sensitive interest" for the purposes of the Code, and the details of the sensitive interest do not need to be disclosed to a meeting, although the fact that you have a sensitive interest must be disclosed, in accordance with paragraphs 8 9 and 10.

Note: Register of interests

Interests under paragraph 8 will be notified to the Monitoring Officer on a form approved for the purpose by the Monitoring Officer and for this purpose will be deemed the "register of interests". A copy of the register will be available for public inspection and will be published on the authority's website.

13. Gifts and Hospitality

- 13.1 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 £100 which you have accepted as a member from any person or body other than the authority.

Appendix A

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This note explains the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 (Ss 29-34) in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. These provisions are enforced by criminal sanction.

They come into force on 1 July 2012.

1 Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

<i>Disclosable Pecuniary Interest</i>	<i>description</i>
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>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.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>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—</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	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.

These descriptions on interests are subject to the following definitions:

“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 section 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.

Offences

It is a criminal offence to

- Fail to notify the Monitoring Officer of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest within 28 days of election
- Fail to disclose a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest at a meeting if it is not on the register
- Fail to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is not on the register that you have disclosed to a meeting
- Participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (without a dispensation)
- Knowingly or recklessly providing information that is false or misleading in notifying the Monitoring Officer of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or in disclosing such interest to a meeting

The criminal penalties available to a court are to impose a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale and disqualification from being a Councillor for up to 5 years.

