



# Ashchurch Rural Parish Council Code Of Members' Conduct

Adopted on 20 April 2026

Next Review due in April 2027 or sooner if required

Introduction	2
Purpose of the code	2
Definitions	2
General principles of conduct	3
Scope of this code	3
Standards of conduct	3
Interests	4
Gifts and hospitality	4
Complaints and standards process	4
Dispensations	5
Training and support	5
Review of the code	5
Appendices	6
Appendix A - The Seven Principles of Public Life	6
Appendix B - Registering Interests	7
Appendix C - The Committee on Standards in Public Life	12

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Code of Members' Conduct ("the Code") is adopted by Ashchurch Rural Parish Council under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

The purpose of this Code is to support high standards of conduct, maintain public confidence, and set clear expectations for behaviour in public office.

This Code is based on the Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct and National Association of Local Councils guidance, and reflects current best practice in relation to councillor conduct, civility, and communications.

This Code should be read alongside Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and the ARPC Media and Communications Policy.

Where there is any conflict or overlap, Members must comply with all relevant Council policies.

## **PURPOSE OF THE CODE**

The purpose of this Code is to promote high standards of conduct, provide clarity on expected behaviour, support integrity, openness and accountability, protect the Council's reputation and public confidence, and ensure fair and consistent handling of conduct issues.

The Council encourages early resolution of issues through advice, training, and informal resolution where appropriate.

## **DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this Code:

"Member" means an elected or co-opted Member of the Council.

"Council" means Ashchurch Rural Parish Council.

"Clerk" means the Proper Officer of the Council.

"Monitoring Officer" means the Monitoring Officer of Tewkesbury Borough Council.

"The Act" means the Localism Act 2011.

"Bullying" means offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or misuse of power intended to undermine or humiliate a person.

"Harassment" means unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

"Respect" means treating others with courtesy, consideration and professionalism in all forms of communication.

"Meeting" means any formal meeting of the Council, its committees, sub-committees or joint bodies.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT**

Members must have regard to the Seven Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Members are expected to act lawfully and in the public interest, treat others with respect, promote high standards of behaviour, avoid conduct that may damage public confidence, act as a role model in public life, and use Council resources appropriately.

## **SCOPE OF THIS CODE**

This Code applies where a Member acts in their official capacity, acts or appears to act as a representative of the Council, conducts themselves in a way that could reasonably affect the reputation of the Council or the office of councillor, or uses their position as a Member.

This includes Council and committee meetings, Council or community events, written, verbal and electronic communication, and social media and online activity.

Members must comply with the ARPC Media and Communications Policy when communicating in any Council-related context or where they could reasonably be perceived as acting as a councillor.

This Code does not apply to purely private conduct unless it could reasonably bring the Council into disrepute.

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

### **Respect**

Members must treat others with respect at all times and must not engage in bullying or harassment.

### **Equality and non-discrimination**

Members must not discriminate unlawfully and should promote equality, diversity and inclusion in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

### **Conduct and reputation**

Members must not behave in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or the Council into disrepute.

### **Officer relations**

Members must respect the impartiality and professional role of officers and must not seek to improperly influence or pressure officers.

### **Confidentiality**

Members must not disclose confidential information unless required by law, authorised by the Council,

or in the public interest following appropriate advice.

### **Use of position**

Members must not use their position improperly to gain advantage or disadvantage for themselves or others.

### **Council resources**

Members must use Council resources only for legitimate Council business and in accordance with Council policies.

### **Communications, media and social media**

Members must comply with the ARPC Media and Communications Policy at all times, ensure communications are lawful, accurate and respectful, not disclose confidential or exempt information, make clear when expressing personal views, and avoid content that could reasonably bring the Council into disrepute.

## **INTERESTS**

Members must comply with the Localism Act 2011 in relation to registration and disclosure of interests.

Members must register interests within 28 days, update interests within 28 days of change, declare interests at meetings where required, and withdraw from participation where required by law.

Where a Member has a disclosable interest, they must not participate unless a dispensation has been granted.

## **GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

Members must not accept gifts or hospitality that could reasonably be perceived as influencing their role.

Gifts or hospitality over £50 must be registered within 28 days.

## **COMPLAINTS AND STANDARDS PROCESS**

Complaints about Member conduct will be handled by the Monitoring Officer at Tewkesbury Borough Council.

The Council expects complaints to be evidence-based, cooperation from Members during investigations, and use of informal resolution where appropriate.

## **DISPENSATIONS**

Members may apply for a dispensation to allow participation where they would otherwise be prohibited under legislation or this Code.

Dispensations will only be granted in accordance with statutory requirements.

## **TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

Members are expected to undertake Code of Conduct training, seek advice where necessary, comply with Council policies including the ARPC Media and Communications Policy, and cooperate with standards processes.

## **REVIEW OF THE CODE**

This Code will be reviewed annually or sooner if required to ensure it remains compliant with legislation, aligned with national best practice, and effective in supporting high standards of conduct.

## APPENDICES

### **APPENDIX A - THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE**

The principles are:

#### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

#### **Integrity**

Holders of public office 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 disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

#### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

#### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

#### **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

#### **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

#### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## APPENDIX B - REGISTERING INTERESTS

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"**Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"**Partner**" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

### Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

### Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

5. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

### Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must

disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
  - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
  - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
  - c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2**

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well-being:
  - a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
  - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

**Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation</b>	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, 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 Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
<b>Contracts</b>	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor 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 (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
<b>Land and Property</b>	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council.  'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
<b>Licenses</b>	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
<b>Corporate tenancies</b>	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with

	whom the councillor 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.
<b>Securities</b>	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor’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 councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have 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.

**Table 2: Other Registrable Interests**

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest :

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Description</b>
Unpaid Directorships	Any unpaid directorship held by the Member
Bodies to which you are appointed or nominated by the Council	Any body of which the Member is a member or in a position of general control or management and to which the Member is appointed or nominated by the Council.
Public Bodies and Functions	Any body exercising functions of a public nature of which the Member is a member or in a position of general control or management.
Charitable Bodies	Any body directed to charitable purposes of which the Member is a member or in a position of general control or management.
Bodies Influencing Public Opinion or Policy	Any body, including any political party or trade union, whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, of which the Member is a member or in a position of general control or management.

## APPENDIX C – THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

The LGA has undertaken this review whilst the Government continues to consider the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in their report on [Local Government Ethical Standards](#). If the Government chooses to implement any of the recommendations, this could require a change to this Code.

The recommendations cover:

- Recommendations for changes to the Localism Act 2011 to clarify in law when the Code of Conduct applies
- The introduction of sanctions
- An appeals process through the Local Government Ombudsman
- Changes to the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
- Updates to the Local Government Transparency Code
- Changes to the role and responsibilities of the Independent Person
- That the criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished

The Local Government Ethical Standards report also includes Best Practice recommendations. These are:

**Best practice 1:** Local authorities should include prohibitions on bullying and harassment in codes of conduct. These should include a definition of bullying and harassment, supplemented with a list of examples of the sort of behaviour covered by such a definition.

**Best practice 2:** Councils should include provisions in their code of conduct requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors.

**Best practice 3:** Principal authorities should review their code of conduct each year and regularly seek, where possible, the views of the public, community organisations and neighbouring authorities.

**Best practice 4:** An authority's code should be readily accessible to both councillors and the public, in a prominent position on a council's website and available in council premises.

**Best practice 5:** Local authorities should update their gifts and hospitality register at least once per quarter, and publish it in an accessible format, such as CSV.

**Best practice 6:** Councils should publish a clear and straightforward public interest test against which allegations are filtered.

**Best practice 7:** Local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons.

**Best practice 8:** An Independent Person should be consulted as to whether to undertake a formal investigation on an allegation, and should be given the option to review and comment on allegations which the responsible officer is minded to dismiss as being without merit, vexatious, or trivial.

**Best practice 9:** Where a local authority makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following a formal investigation, a decision notice should be published as soon as possible on its website, including a brief statement of facts, the provisions of the code engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the reasoning of the decision-maker, and any sanction applied.

**Best practice 10:** A local authority should have straightforward and accessible guidance on its website on how to make a complaint under the code of conduct, the process for handling complaints, and estimated timescales for investigations and outcomes.

**Best practice 11:** Formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk should be made by the chair or by the parish council, rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances.

**Best practice 12:** Monitoring Officers' roles should include providing advice, support and management of investigations and adjudications on alleged breaches to parish councils within the remit of the principal authority. They should be provided with adequate training, corporate support and resources to undertake this work.

**Best practice 13:** A local authority should have procedures in place to address any conflicts of interest when undertaking a standards investigation. Possible steps should include asking the Monitoring Officer from a different authority to undertake the investigation.

**Best practice 14:** Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.

**Best practice 15:** Senior officers should meet regularly with political group leaders or group whips to discuss standards issues.