



# BEACONSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Code of Conduct for Members

Adopted on 11 June 2020

## Part 1 – General Provisions

### Introduction

1. (1) The Council has adopted this Code of Conduct pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) to promote and maintain high standards of behaviour by its members and co-opted members whenever they conduct the business of the Council including 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
- (2) This Code of Conduct complies with Section 28 the Act and is consistent with the principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

### Scope

2. (1) This Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you are acting in your capacity as a member of the Council, including: –
  - (a) at formal meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees
  - (b) when acting as a representative of the Council
  - (c) in discharging your functions as a local/ward Councillor
  - (d) at briefing meetings with officers
  - (e) at site visits and
  - (f) when corresponding with the Council other than in a private capacity
- (2) Where you act as a representative of the Council: –
  - (a) on another local authority, you must when acting for that 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 this Code of Conduct, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject

### General obligations

3. You must –

- (1) provide leadership to the council and communities within its area, by personal example
- (2) respect others and not bully any person
- (3) recognise that officers (other than political assistants) are employed by and serve the whole council
- (4) respect the confidentiality of information which you receive as a member –
  - i. 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
  - ii. not obstructing third parties' legal rights of access to information
- (5) not misconduct yourself in a manner which is likely to bring the council into disrepute
- (6) use your position as a member in the public interest and not for personal advantage
- (7) act in accordance with the council's reasonable rules on the use of the resources of the council for private or political purposes
- (8) exercise your own independent judgement, taking decisions for good and substantial reasons –
  - i. attaching appropriate weight to all relevant considerations including, where appropriate, public opinion
  - ii. paying due regard to the advice of officers and
  - iii. stating the reasons for your decisions where those reasons are not otherwise apparent
- (9) account for your actions
- (10) ensure that the council acts within the law.

## **Part 2 - Interests**

### **Personal interests**

4. In addition to the statutory requirements under the Act to register and declare Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in paragraph 9 below, and save for the subject interest already having been declared as a DPI and the statutory provisions complied with, the following Paragraphs 5 to 8 shall also apply.
5. (1) You have a personal interest in any business of the council where either—
  - (a) it relates to or is likely to affect—
    - (i) any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by the council;
    - (ii) any body—

- (aa) exercising functions of a public nature;
  - (bb) directed to charitable purposes; or
  - (cc) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union),  
of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management;
  - (iii) any person or body who employs or has appointed you;
  - (iv) the interests of any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50;
- (b) a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of a relevant person to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the parish;
- (2) In sub-paragraph (1)(b), a relevant person is—
- (a) a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association; or
  - (b) any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;
  - (c) any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or
  - (d) any body of a type described in sub-paragraph (1) (a) (i) or (ii).

### **Disclosure of personal interests**

6. (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (4), where you have a personal interest in any business of the council and you attend a meeting of the council at which the business is considered, you must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.
- (2) Where you have a personal interest in any business of the council which solely relates to a body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by the council, you need only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest if that interest is prejudicial.
- (3) Where you have a personal interest in any business of the council of the type mentioned in paragraph 5(1) (a) (iv), you need not disclose the nature or existence of that interest to the meeting if the interest was registered more than three years before the date of the meeting.
- (4) Sub-paragraph (1) only applies where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest.
- (5) Having declared a personal interest you may continue to speak and vote on the item of business concerned.

7. (1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a personal interest in any business of the council you also have a prejudicial interest in that business where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.
- (2) You do not have a prejudicial interest in any business of the council where that business—
- (a) does not affect your financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in paragraph 5;
  - (b) does not relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in paragraph 5; or
  - (c) relates to the functions of the council in respect of—
    - (i) an allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
    - (ii) any ceremonial honour given to members; and
    - (iii) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

#### **Effect of prejudicial interests on participation**

8. (1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your council—
- (a) you must declare the existence and nature of your interest and withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting considering the business is being held—
    - (i) in a case where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence;
    - (ii) in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at that meeting;unless you have obtained a dispensation from your council; and
  - (B) you must not seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.
- (2) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of the council you may attend a meeting but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.

#### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**

9. A Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) is as defined in 'The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012' (The Regulations) and the categories of interest are

set out in Appendix A.

**Parish Councils are recommended to adopt a new standing order to the following effect**  
*[Note: In addition to the statutory requirements under the Act, Council Standing Orders require you to withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held if you have a DPI in an item of business being considered at that meeting unless a Dispensation has been granted pursuant to and in accordance with Section 33 of the Act.]*

### **Part 3 - Registration of Members' Interests**

#### **Registration or Disclosure of members' interests**

10. (1) Subject to paragraph 11, you must, within 28 days of—

- (a) in relation to Personal Interests, this Code being adopted by or applied to the council; or
- (c) otherwise your election or appointment to office (where that is later),

register in the council's register of members' interests maintained under Section 29 of the Act, details of any DPI which you or your spouse or civil partner (or person with whom you are living as spouse or civil partner) may have, together with your personal interests where they fall within a category mentioned in paragraph 5(1) (a), by providing written notification to the District Council's monitoring officer.

- (2) Failure to register or disclose any DPI in accordance with section 30(1) or 31(2), (3) or (7) of the Act, or participating in any discussion or vote in contravention of section 31(4) of the Act, or taking any steps in contravention of section 31(8) of the Act, is a criminal offence and risks a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (currently £5,000) or disqualification as a member for a period not exceeding 5 years.
- (3) Subject to paragraph 11, you must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new DPI and/or personal interest or change to any DPI and/or personal interest registered under paragraph (1), register details of that new DPI and/or personal interest or change by providing written notification to the District Council's monitoring officer.
- (4) Subject to Paragraph 11, you are required to disclose the existence and nature of any DPI when it arises at a meeting even where already registered in the Register or pending registration so the minutes can be duly noted.

#### **Sensitive interest**

- 11. (1) Where you consider that you have a sensitive interest (whether or not a DPI), and the District Council's monitoring officer agrees, if the interest is entered in the Council's register, copies of the register that are made available for inspection and any published version of the register, must not include details of the interest (but may state that the member has an interest the details of which are withheld under

section 32 (2) of the Act) and any public declaration required need only state the fact an interest arises without further detail.

- (2) You must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change of circumstances which means that information excluded under paragraph (1) is no longer a sensitive interest, notify the District Council's monitoring officer asking that the interest be included in the Council's register of members' interests.
- (3) In this Code, "sensitive interest" means an interest, the nature of which is such that you and the District Council's monitoring officer consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to you, or a person connected with you, being subject to violence or intimidation.

### **Dispensations**

12. On a written request made to the Council's proper officer, the Council may grant a dispensation for you to participate in a discussion and vote on a matter at a meeting even if you have a DPI or a prejudicial interest and that you be relieved of the obligation to otherwise withdraw from the room in which the matter is being considered. Such dispensation may be granted if the Council considers that the number of members otherwise prohibited from taking part in the meeting would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business that it would impede the transaction of the business; or it is in the interests of the inhabitants in the council's area to allow you to take part; or it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

## Appendix A

### Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

DPI's are defined in the 2012 Regulations as follows –

<b><i>Interest</i></b>	<b><i>Prescribed description</i></b>
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 –

“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.