

# **THE FOREST OF DEAN DISTRICT CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TOWNS AND PARISHES Adopted by Alvington Parish Council on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020**

## **1. Introduction**

Pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011, Alvington Parish Council ('the Council') has adopted this Code of Conduct 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 business of 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.

This Code of Conduct is based on the following principles of behaviour by members:

Selflessness: you must take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. You must not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefit for yourself, your family or friends;

Integrity: you must not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence you in the performance of your official duties;

Objectivity: in carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding of contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, you must make choices on merit;

Accountability: you are accountable for your decisions and actions to the public and must submit yourself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to your office;

Openness: you must be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that you take and should give reasons for your decisions. Only when the wider public interest clearly demands it, should you restrict information;

Honesty: you have a duty to declare any personal interests relating to your public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest;

Leadership: you must promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

## **2. Definitions**

2.1 For the purposes of this Code, a 'co-opted member' is a person who is not a member of the Council but who is either a member of any committee or subcommittee of the Council, or a member of, and represents the Council on any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Council, and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee.

2.2 For the purposes of this Code, a 'meeting' is a meeting of the Council, any of its committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees.

2.3 For the purposes of this Code, and unless otherwise expressed, a reference to a member of the Council includes a co-opted member of the Council.

2.4 The interests listed in Appendix A are "Disclosable Pecuniary Interests", those listed in Appendix B are "Other Interests"

### **3. Members obligations**

When a member of the Council acts, claims to act or gives the impression of acting as a representative of the Council, he/she has the following obligations:

3.1 To behave in such a way that a reasonable person would regard as respectful

3.2 Not act in a way which a reasonable person would regard as bullying or intimidatory

3.3 Not seek to improperly confer an advantage on any person

3.4 To use the resources of the Council in accordance with its requirement

3.5 Not disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.

### **4. Registration of interests**

4.1 Within 28 days of this Code being adopted by the Council, or the member's election or the co-opted member's appointment (where that is later), he / she shall register all interests which fall within the categories set out in Appendices A and B.

4.2 Upon the re-election of a member or the re-appointment of a co-opted member, he / she shall within 28 days re-register any interests in Appendices A and B.

4.3 A member shall register any change to interests or new interests in Appendices A and B within 28 days of becoming aware of it.

4.4 A member need only declare on the public register of interests the existence - but not the details - of any interest which the Monitoring Officer agrees is a 'sensitive interest'. A sensitive interest is one which, if disclosed on a public register, could lead the member or a person connected with the member to be subject to violence or intimidation.

### **5. Declarations of interest**

5.1 If the interest is listed in Appendix A the member shall not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter

5.2 If the interest is listed in Appendix B, the member shall withdraw from the meeting unless he wishes to speak on the matter, in which case he may do so provided that:

5.2.1 the public are also allowed to speak, and

5.2.2 he declares his interest he shall then withdraw from the meeting

5.3 In every case where the interest is a sensitive one, it should be declared but not the nature of it.

5.4 Where the matter relates to a financial interest of a friend, relative or close associate he shall declare the nature of the interest and withdraw from the meeting. If he wishes to speak on the matter then sub clauses 5.2.1 & 5.2.2 apply.

## **6. Dispensations**

On a written request made to the Council's proper officer, the Council may grant a member dispensation to participate in a discussion and vote on a matter if:

6.1 he / she has an interest in Appendices A and B if the Council believes that the number of members otherwise prohibited from taking part in the meeting would impede the transaction of the business; or

6.2 it is in the interests of the inhabitants in the Council's area to allow the member to take part; or

6.3 it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

## **7. Computer, Social Media and Email Acceptable Use Policy**

The Clerk will be responsible for the proper use and maintenance of any computer email system or official social media page or site owned by the Council. This will include prompt installation of all software and security updates and annual renewal of anti-virus software subscription.

This policy sets out the correct use of Alvington Parish Council ('the Council') owned computer(s) and any related equipment (external hard drives/USB devices etc.). No person other than the Clerk, an Alvington Parish Councillor, or person authorised by the Council may use the Council owned computer(s) or any associated equipment. Any necessary maintenance or repairs outside of the Council's ability will only be carried out by the manufacturer or an agent approved by the Council. This policy demonstrates how the Council will comply with the Computers Misuse Act 1990 and how it will protect its systems and the data on them.

Any employee of Alvington Parish Council who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. The name of any Councillor(s) or Proper Officer who violate this policy will be reported to the Forest of Dean District Monitoring Officer for action.

This policy also sets out expected standards of usage of internet, email and social media by the Council.

For the purposes of this policy, an 'Employee' is defined as Councillors, Proper Officer and any other persons who form any formal part of Alvington Parish Council, including, but not limited to, committee or sub committee members and volunteers acting on the Council's behalf.

The Council reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

## **7.1 Use of Passwords**

7.1.1 The Council owned computer(s) and any other device owned by the Council, capable of storing information for any Council purpose will be password protected. This is also extended to any personal device used for any official Council purposes such as Smart Phones, USB drives or personal computers.

7.1.2 Data files must not be further password protected without authorisation.

## **7.2 Email**

7.2.1 All email is the property of the Council. We want a workplace that is free of harassment and sensitive to the welfare of our employees and Council members. Therefore, we do not allow any representative of Alvington Parish Council to use computers and email in ways that are disruptive, offensive to others, or harmful to morale.

7.2.2 A "Confidentiality Statement" will be added to all outgoing emails.

## **7.3 Computer Use and General Conduct**

7.3.1 There must be no exchange of protected data or programs between the Council computer(s) and any third party computer without prior written approval of the Council.

7.3.2 No unauthorised modifications may be made to the Council owned computer(s) other than those required for normal system and security updates.

7.3.3 You must not display, download, or email sexually explicit images, messages, or cartoons.

7.3.5 Internet activity must be limited to those activities that relate to Council matters or matters approved in advance by the Council.

7.3.6 All data that is written, sent, or received through our computer or email systems forms part of the Council's official records. This means that the Council can be legally required to produce that information to law enforcement or other parties. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies to all data stored within its system. It is the duty of the user to ensure that the information contained in internet email messages and other transmissions is accurate, appropriate, ethical, and legal. The Council therefore reserves the right to monitor how you use the internet via the Council computer. We also reserve the right to find and read any data that you write, send, or receive through our computer or place in the public domain through use of social media or other electronic means.

7.3.7 You may not use the computer to write, send, read, or receive data that contains content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any employee or other person.

7.3.8 If any employee accesses the internet via the Council owned computer in a way that violates the law or policies, they will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Any Councillor accessing the internet inappropriately via Council owned computers will also be reported to the District Monitoring Officer as per the Council's adopted Code of Conduct.

7.2.9 You must not use official social media or email for ethnic slurs, racial comments, off-colour jokes, or anything that another person might consider to be harassment or disrespectful.

7.3.10 Full rights and ownership of any computer, hardware, official Council social media site/page or Council email owned by Alvington Parish Council remains the property of the Council and must be returned to the Council upon asking, along with any access passwords to enable full access to the associated material and data within.

7.3.11 If any user is unsure about what constitutes acceptable Internet usage, then he/she should refer to the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council for further guidance and clarification.

7.3.12 All staff and members must act in accordance with GDPR law, and with the parish council's General Data Protection Regulations and Privacy Notice

## 8. Parish Councillor Role Description

Details of the role of a parish councillor and the qualities required in a person who does the job (called person specification).

### Description of the role

<b>Role</b>	Parish Councillor
<b>Responsible to</b>	All people resident within the Parish
<b>Regular liaison with</b>	Other councillors, local authorities, residents
<b>Period of service</b>	Four years with possible extension.
<b>Salary</b>	This is a voluntary position 'in office' with some expenses able to be paid in certain cases.

### Main purpose

Representing the views of all residents within your parish.

### Secondary purpose

I. As part of a local council you will have responsibility for running local services which may include: open spaces, play areas, village halls, community car schemes and potentially much more.

II. Deciding on how much to raise through the council tax in order to deliver your council's services.

III. Influencing and shaping the long term development policy for the parish, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish.

IV. Improve the quality of life and the environment in their local area.

V. Working to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent.

VI. Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies.

### **History of parish councils**

Parish councils have their origins in medieval times, in an era when money was seldom used and when few people lived in the countryside. Communities came together in order to organise land management, agriculture and settle disputes.

The current system of parish councils was formed in 1896. There are currently around 10,000 parish councils in the country.

Any community can ask to have a parish council and, in fact, many new parishes have been formed in recent years -particularly in urban areas.

Local councils have evolved considerably over the last 1000 or so years, but one thing remains the same: they are the tier of local government which is closest to individual communities and therefore have the greatest potential for identifying, understanding and addressing the needs of the communities they serve.

While some larger councils are run along party political lines, there is no expectation that you have to join a political party. The vast majority of parish councils are not split by party politics.

### **Person Specification**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
Over 21 and on the electoral register	Y	
A resident of the parish for which you are standing (although there are certain exceptions)	Y	
Able to attend regular evening meetings.	Y	
Interest in local issues and things which affect people.	Y	
Keen to improve the local environment and quality of life.		Y
An understanding and willingness to represent the views of the whole community.	Y	

An interest in learning and developing your role in the community.		Y
Attend; meetings relating to the wider area, training, and sub committee updates often on a rotational basis.	Y	
Access and ability to use electronic means of communications.		Y