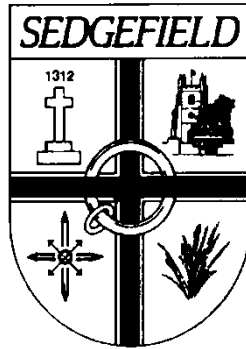


Sedgefield Town Council



CODE OF CONDUCT

Passionate about Sedgefield

north east
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Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
9.0.	15.05.23	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	30.03.24

SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT

INDEX

	Introduction:	3
1.	Part One – General Conduct	3
2.	Part Two – Registration of Interests	7
	Register of Interests	7
	Disclosable Pecuniary Interests Entered On The Register	7
	Disclosable Pecuniary Interests Not Entered On The Register	8
	Sensitive Interests	8
	Other Relevant Interests	9
	Gifts and Hospitality	9

Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
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This Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council at its AGM on 15th May 2023. It will be reviewed annually and so that it can be presented for readoption at subsequent Council AGMs.

INTRODUCTION:

This Code sets out the conduct that is expected of elected and co-opted Members of the Council when they are acting in that capacity. This means the Code applies whenever you:

- Conduct the business of the Council (including the business of your office as an elected Councillor or co-opted member); or
- Act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting as a representative of the Council.

‘Co-opted Member’ means any person who is a Member of any Committee or Working Group of the Council with a right to vote but is not one of its elected Members.

1. PART ONE – GENERAL CONDUCT:

- 1.1. Members and co-opted Members of Sedgefield Town Council (“the Council”) are expected to undertake their duties as follows:
- 1.2. Represent the community and work constructively with employees and partner organisations to ensure the area is a safer place to live, work and visit.

Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
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1.3. Behave in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for residents and maintain public confidence in the Council:

a)	Selflessness:	Act solely in terms of the public interest and not act in such a way as to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or friends.
b)	Integrity:	Not placing 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;
c)	Objectivity:	Make choices on merit, in carrying out public business, including when making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits;
d)	Accountability:	Be accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office;
e)	Openness:	Be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take, and give reasons for decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest or the law clearly demands;
f)	Honesty:	Declare any private interests relating to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest;
g)	Leadership:	Promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

1.4. Act in accordance with the principles in paragraph 1.3. and, in particular:

- a) Champion the needs of residents – the whole community and all constituents, including those who did not vote for them – and put the public interest first;
- b) Deal with representations or enquiries from residents, members of our communities and visitors fairly, appropriately and impartially;

Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
9.0.	15.05.23	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	30.03.24

- c) Not allow other pressures, including the financial interests of themselves or others connected to them, to deter them from pursuing the interests of the Council or the good governance of the Council in the proper manner;
- d) Exercise independent judgement and not compromise their position by placing themselves under obligations to outside individuals or organisations who might seek to influence the way they perform their duties as a Member/Co-opted Member of the Council;
- e) Listen to the interests of all parties, including relevant advice from statutory and other professional officers, take all relevant information into consideration, remain objective and make decisions on merit;
- f) Be accountable for decisions and cooperate when scrutinised internally and externally, including by local residents;
- g) Contribute to making the Council's decision making processes as open and transparent as possible to ensure residents understand the reasoning behind those decisions and are informed when holding the Council to account but restricting access to information when the wider public interest or the law requires it;
- h) Behave in accordance with all legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within the Council's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Council's resources;
- i) Value colleagues and staff and engage with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect that is essential to good local government;
- j) Always treat people with respect, including the organisations and public they engage with and work alongside:

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. Members should express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. Members must not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

Members should treat members of the public politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in Members. Members equally have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening, Members may stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow Members, where appropriate action could then be taken under the Code of Conduct, and principal local

Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
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authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the principal local authority's relevant protocols;

- k) Provide leadership through behaving in accordance with these principles when championing the interests of the community with other organisations as well as within this Council;
- l) Not disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone or information acquired, which they believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, without express authority and/or unless the law requires it.
- m) Not to bully or harass any person (including specifically any Council employee) and you must not intimidate or improperly influence, or attempt to intimidate or improperly influence, any person who is involved in any complaint about any alleged breach of the Code of Conduct.
Bullying may be characterised as: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour; or an abuse or misuse of power in a way that intends to undermine, humiliate, criticise unfairly or injure someone.
Harassment may be characterised as unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for an individual.
Bullying and/or harassment may take many forms, it could include but is not limited to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, belief, sex and/or sexual orientation.
- n) Not to bring the role of Member or the Council into disrepute and be aware that the actions and behaviour of a Member are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public.
- o) To hold the Council and fellow Members to account and constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the Council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

1.5. It is expected that Members will at all times comply with request as part of Code of Conduct investigations and any arising outcomes. Members will not submit malicious or trivial complaints.

1.6. Where it is alleged that a Member has failed to act in accordance with the Code, a complaint will be presented to the Monitoring Officer for consideration in accordance with the Local Assessment Procedure and where necessary the Local Determination Procedure.

Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
9.0.	15.05.23	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	30.03.24

2. PART TWO – REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

Register of Interest:

2.1. Members must:

- a) Register and, where appropriate, disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests that they are obliged to declare under the Localism Act and associated regulations; and
- b) Register any body of which they are a member (or in a position of general control or management) to which you were appointed or nominated by the Council; and
- c) Register details of their membership of any organisation or body whose rules or requirements of membership could be regarded as suggesting a degree of loyalty to that organisation or body. This could arise by reason of an organisations having an obligation of secrecy about its rules, its membership or conduct and/or a commitment of allegiance or support to that organisation or body. Such organisations or bodies may or may not be charitable concerns and they may also have a local, regional, national or international aspect; and
- d) Register details of their membership of any trade union within the meaning of Section 1 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

2.2. Registration of interests shall be completed by provision of details upon a signed prescribed form which is submitted to the Monitoring Officer at Durham County Council. Members must ensure they keep the register updated and acknowledge that its content will be published on the principal authority's and Council's websites and will be open to the public to inspect.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests Entered On The Register:

2.3. If Members are present at a meeting of the Council and:

- a) They are aware that they have a disclosable pecuniary interest under paragraph 2.1 a) in this Code in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting; and
- b) The interest is entered in the Council's register they may not participate in any discussion or further discussion of an item of business or in any vote or further vote taken on that item which affects or relates to

Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
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the subject matter in which they have such an interest; and they must leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion and or voting takes place.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests NOT Entered On The Register:

- 2.4. If Members are present at a meeting of the Council and:
- a) Aware that they have a disclosable pecuniary interest under paragraph 2.1 a) in this Code in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting; **and**
 - b) The interest is not entered in the Council's register, they must disclose the interest to the meeting. Furthermore, they may not participate or further participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting or participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting and must leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion and or voting takes place.
- 2.5. If an interest referred to in paragraph 2.1 a) of this Code is not entered on the Council's register and is not the subject of a pending registration, Members must notify the principal authority's Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the date of the disclosure.
- 2.6. Members with the power to discharge a Council function acting alone will have a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter to be dealt with or being dealt with by them in the course of discharging that function.
- a) They may not take any steps, or any further steps, in relation to the matter (except for the purpose of enabling the matter to be dealt with otherwise than by them); **and**
 - b) If the interest is not entered on the Council's register and is not the subject of a pending registration, they must notify the principal authority's Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of becoming aware of the interest.

Sensitive Interests:

- 2.7. This applies to a situation where a Member considers that the disclosure of the details of their interest – including that of their spouse/partner – could lead to them, or a person being connected with them, being subject to violence or intimidation.
- 2.8. In such circumstances the Member should share their concerns with the principal authority's Monitoring Officer. If the Monitoring Officer agrees with the Member, then the details of the interest will not be included in the Council's published Register of Interests, but the Register may state the Member had registered an interest the details of which are being withheld under Section 32 of the Localism Act 2011.

Version:	Adopted:	Officer Responsible:	Review Date:
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- 2.9. If the Monitoring Officer accepts the Member has a sensitive interest under Section 32 of the Localism Act 2011, the Member should declare the existence of the interest at any meeting at which they are present but do not need to declare details of the interest.
- 2.10. If circumstances change and the information excluded from the Register on the grounds of sensitive is no longer sensitive information, the Member must notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

Other Relevant Interests:

- 2.11. Members may have an Other Relevant Interest (which is not a disclosable pecuniary interest) in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting) where:
- a) A decision in relation to that matter might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of them or a member of their family or a person with whom they have a close association, or an organisation or body under paragraph 2.1 b), c) or d) in this Code, to a greater extent that it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the Parish for which they have been elected or otherwise of the Council's administrative area; **and**
 - b) The interest is one that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice their judgement of the public interest.
- 2.12. Members with an Other Relevant Interest as described in 2.11 of this Code:
Where a member has an Other Relevant Interest in an item of business as described in 2.2 of this Code, the member shall declare it at the earliest opportunity. The member may make a representation on the item but will not be permitted to participate in any discussion or vote taken on the matter at the meeting. The member must leave the meeting once the representation has been made to avoid influence on those making the decision.

Gifts and Hospitality:

Members must refer to the Council's Gifts and Hospitality Policy for instruction on how to comply with this matter.

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