

# Lower Beeding Parish Council

## COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT

### **General Principles**

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees of the Council. The role of such employees is to serve the Council in providing advice, implementing its policies, and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, they must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

### **Accountability**

Employees of the Council work for their employing Council and serve the whole of the Council. They are accountable to and owe a duty to the Council. They must act in accordance with the principles set out in this Code, recognizing the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.

### **Political Neutrality**

Employees of the Council must follow every lawfully expressed policy of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

### **Relations with members, the public and other employees**

Mutual respect between employees and members is essential to good local government, and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis. Employees of the Council should deal with the public, members and other employees sympathetically, efficiently, and without bias.

### **Equality**

Employees of the Council must comply with policies relating to equality issues, as agreed by the Council, in addition to the requirements of the law.

### **Stewardship**

Employees of the Council must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner, and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the authority for personal use unless authorised to do so.

### **Personal Interests**

Whilst employees' private lives are their own concern, they must not allow their private interests to conflict with their public duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interests, or the interests of others. In particular, they must comply with:

- (1) any rules of the Council on the registration and declaration by employees of financial and non - financial interests,
- (2) any rules of the Council on the declaration by employees of hospitality or gifts offered to or received by them, from any person or organisation doing or seeking to do business, or otherwise benefiting or seeking to benefit from a relationship with the Council. Employees must not accept benefits from a third party unless authorised to do so by the Council.

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### **Treatment of Information**

Openness in the dissemination of information and decision making should be the norm in the Council. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate for a wide audience. Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a member, or other person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions. Nothing in this Code can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.

### **Appointment of Staff**

Employees of the Council involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, such employees must not be involved in any appointment, or any other decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other employee, or prospective employee, to whom they are related, or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside work.

### **Contractors**

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the Chairman. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders, and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against. Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship to the Chairman.

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Any employee attending work whilst under the influence of alcohol will be liable for disciplinary action. The Council views any consumption/possession/dealing/handling of illegal substances as a very serious matter and will take disciplinary action in appropriate cases. Any of the above will normally result in summary dismissal.

### **Whistleblowing**

Employees who have concerns about wrongdoing at work should contact the Chairman.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects workers who 'blow the whistle' about wrongdoing. Certain kinds of disclosures qualify for protection ("qualifying disclosures"). Qualifying disclosures are disclosures of information which the worker reasonably believes tend to show one or more of the following matters is either happening now, took place in the past, or is likely to happen in the future:

- a criminal offence;

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- the breach of a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- a danger to the health or safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment; or
- deliberate covering up of information tending to show any of the above five matters.

It should be noted that in making a disclosure the employee must have reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show one or more of the offences or breaches listed above ('a relevant failure'). The belief need not be correct - it might be discovered subsequently that the worker was in fact wrong - but the worker must show that he held the belief, and that it was a reasonable belief in the circumstances at the time of disclosure.