

CONSTITUTION

October 2026

PART C

Part C Codes of conduct and Protocols

Contents

Code of Conduct for Members 1

Introduction 2

Standards of councillor conduct 5

General Conduct 5

1. Respect 5
2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination 5
3. Impartiality of officers of the council 6
4. Confidentiality and access to information 7
5. Disrepute 7
6. Use of position 8
7. Use of local authority resources and facilities 8

7B – Consideration of Advice 9

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct 9

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority 10

9. Interests 10
10. Gifts and hospitality 11

Appendices 12

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life 13

Appendix B - Registering interests 14

Appendix C – the Committee on Standards in Public Life 19

Members' Planning Code of Good Practice 21

Introduction 22

1. Relationship to the Members' Code of Conduct 22
2. Development Proposals and Interests under the Members' Code 23
3. Fettering Discretion in the Planning Process 23
4. Contact with Applicants, Developers and Objectors 25
5. Lobbying of Councillors 26
6. Lobbying by Councillors 27
7. Site Visits/Inspections 27
8. Public Speaking at Meetings 29
9. Officers 29

10. Decision Making 29
11. Training 30
APPENDIX 1 32
APPENDIX 2 33
Member / Officer Protocol 35
Introduction 36
The relationship: general points 36
The relationship: officer support to members: general points 38
The relationship: officer support: members and party groups 38
Support services to members and party groups 40
Members' access to information and to council documents 40
Correspondence 42
Publicity and press releases 42
Involvement of ward councillors 43
Conclusion 43
Officer/member protocol 43
Media protocol (May 2026) 45
Introduction 48
The legal context 48
Our approach to media relations 49
The media 49
Communications planning 49
Roles and responsibilities 50
Handling media enquiries 51
Media releases 52
Media interviews 54
Media handling and Council meetings 54
Impartiality principle 56
Party political issues 56
Publicity in pre-election periods 57
Schools 57
Partnerships 58
Non-council related media activity 58
Managing negative issues 59
Correcting inaccurate reporting 59
When the council gets it wrong 60

Leaked documents 60
Events, photography and video 60
Monitoring and evaluation 61
Complaints 61
Code of Corporate Governance 2026 62
What is Corporate Governance? 63
What is the purpose of the Code of Corporate Governance? 63
What is the Code based upon? 63
Applying the Core Principles 65
(A) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law 65
(B) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement. 66
(C) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits. 67
(D) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes. 68
(E) Developing the Councils capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it. 69
(F) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management. 71
(G) Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability. 73
Monitoring and Review 75
Code of Conduct for Employees 76
Code of Conduct 79
1. Standards 79
2. Equality 79
3. Political Neutrality 80
4. Disclosure of Information 80
5. Relationships with Councillors 81
6. Commitments Outside of Work and Conflicts of Interest 81
7. Personal and Financial Interests 81
8. Use of Financial Resources 82
9. Contracts and Contractors 82
10. Appointments, Employment and IT Matters 83
11. Professional Misconduct 84
12. Court/Tribunal Proceedings 84
13. Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship 84

14. Inventions, Patents and Intellectual Rights 85
15. Bribery and Corruption 85
16. Public relations and talking to the media 85
Appendix 1 87
Councillor Role Descriptions 90
Ward Councillor 91
Scrutiny Commission Member 92
Chair of the Scrutiny Commission 92
Chair of Non-Executive Committee 93
Lead Member For A Non-Executive Committee 93
Political Group Leader 93
Chair and Vice Chair of Council 95
Executive Member – Generic Duties 96
Specific Responsibilities - for the Executive Member for Children and Young People 96
Specific Responsibilities -for the Executive Member for Adults and Homes 97
Specific Responsibilities - for the Executive Member for Communities and Place 98
Specific Responsibilities - for the Executive Member for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure 98
Specific Responsibilities for the Executive Members 98
LEADER 99
CO-LEADER or DEPUTY LEADER 99
Members' Allowances and Leave Scheme 100
1. Basic Allowance 101
2. Number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) 101
3. Receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances 101
4. Co-optee's Allowance 101
5. Transparency and Accountability 102
6. Travel and Subsistence Allowances 102
7. Dependant Carers Allowance 102
8. Updating of Allowances 102
9. Pensions for Councillors 103
10. Withholding or Reclaiming Allowances where a Councillor is Suspended or Partially Suspended 103
11. Attendance at meetings 103
13. Election to Forgo Allowances 104
14. Membership of Another Authority 104

Appendix 1 105
Appendix 2 106
Appendix 3 109
Appendix 4 111
Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen 112

C. Part C

South Gloucestershire Council

Delivering for you

Code of Conduct for Members

Introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed this Model Councillor Code of Conduct, in association with key partners and after extensive consultation with the sector, as part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. It is a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments.

All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct.

The LGA will undertake an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit- for-purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to town and parish councils.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a "councillor" means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A "co-opted member" is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as "a person who is not a member of the authority but who

a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;

b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee".

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, "local authority" includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The LGA encourages the use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles.

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and parish councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.

Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.
Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

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. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.
In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to 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 councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor-officer protocol.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the council

As a councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 I do not disclose information:

a. given to me in confidence by anyone
b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless
    i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;
    ii. I am required by law to do so;
    iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
    iv. the disclosure is:
        1. reasonable and in the public interest; and
        2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and
        3. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.

4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to 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.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse council resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:

a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and
b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.
Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers

- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

7B – Consideration of Advice

As a councillor

7B.1 I will, when reaching decisions on any matter, consider and pay due regard to any relevant advice provided to me by:-

a) the Council's Chief Finance Officer (S151) and/or
b) the Council's Monitoring Officer

in accordance with their legal requirements.

7B.2 I will give reasons for departing from the advice of the Chief Finance Officer (S151) or Monitoring Officer

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to have regard to advice from your Chief Finance Officer or Monitoring Officer where they give that advice under their statutory duties. As a councillor you must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any legal requirements and any reasonable requirements imposed by your local authority.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

8.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.

8.2 I do not make trivial/malicious or tit for tat complaints against other councillors

8.3 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

8.4 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.

8.5 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in **Table 1**, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor:

10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.

10.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.

10.3 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 or totalling £100 over a year from a single source that I have been offered but have refused to accept within 28 days of the offer.

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

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 or within 28 days of your interests changing 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.

5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. 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

7. 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.

8. 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 asset 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 voteon 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.

10. Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matterto be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone elseto deal with it.

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.

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade,profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on forprofit or gain.
Sponsorship	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.
Contracts	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.
Land and Property	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.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and

	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.
Securities	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 Registerable Interest :

a) any unpaid directorships

b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

(iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinionor policy (including any political party or trade union)

of which you are 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.

The LGA has committed to reviewing the Code on an annual basis to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

Members' Planning Code of Good Practice

Updated May 2024

Introduction

The aim of this code of good practice: to ensure that in the planning process there are no grounds for suggesting that a decision has been biased, partial or not well founded in any way.

One of the key purposes of the planning system is to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest**. Your role as a Member of the Planning Authority is** to make planning decisions openly, impartially, with sound judgement and for justifiable reasons. You are also a democratically accountable decision-taker who had been elected to provide and pursue policies. You are entitled to be predisposed to make planning decisions in accordance with your political views and policies **provided** that you have considered all material considerations and have given fair consideration to relevant points raised.

When the Code of Good Practice applies: this code applies to Members at all times when involving themselves in the planning process. (This includes when taking part in the decision making meetings of the Council in exercising the functions of the Planning Authority or when involved on less formal occasions, such as meetings with officers or the public and consultative meetings). It applies as equally to planning enforcement matters or site specific policy issues as it does to planning applications.

If you have any doubts about the application of this Code to your own circumstances you should seek advice early, from the Monitoring Officer or one of his or her staff, and preferably well before any meeting takes place.

1. Relationship to the Members' Code of Conduct

- **Do** apply the rules in the Authority's Code of Conduct first, which must be always be complied with. This is both the rules on disclosable pecuniary interests (and other interests if included in your authority's code) and the general rules giving effect to the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- **Do** then apply the rules in this Members' Planning Code, which seek to explain and supplement the Members' Code of Conduct for the purposes of planning and development control. If you do not abide by this Members' Planning Code, you may put:
    - the Council at risk of proceedings on the legality or maladministration of the related decision; and
    - yourself at risk of either being named in a report made to the Standards Committee or Council or, if the failure is also likely to be a breach of the Localism Act 2011, a complaint being made to the police to consider criminal proceedings.
- **Do** be aware that, like the Authority's Code of Conduct, this Planning Code is a reflection and summary of the law on decision making and not a direct replication of it. If in doubt, seek the advice of your monitoring officer or their staff advising at the meeting.

2. Development Proposals and Interests under the Members' Code

- **Do** disclose the existence and nature of your interest as required by your members Code of Conduct.
- **Do take into account when approaching a decision that** the Principle of integrity is defined, by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in 2013, in terms that "*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 declare and resolve any interests and relationships***". It is therefore advisable that you:
  - **Don't** seek or accept any preferential treatment, or place yourself in a position that could lead the public to think you are receiving preferential treatment, because of your position as a councillor. This would include, where you have a disclosable or other personal conflict of interest in a proposal, using your position to discuss that proposal with officers or Members when other members of the public would not have the same opportunity to do so.
  - **Do** note that you are not prevented from seeking to explain and justify a proposal in which you may have a conflict of interest to an appropriate officer, in person or in writing, but that the Members' Code of Conduct may place additional limitations on you in representing that proposal
  - **Do** notify the Monitoring Officer in writing where it is clear to you that you have a disclosable pecuniary interest or other personal conflict of interest and note that:
    - you should send the notification no later than submission of that application where you can;
    - the proposal will always be reported to the Committee as a main item and not dealt with by officers under delegated powers;
    - you must not get involved in the processing of the application; and
    - it is advisable that you employ an agent to act on your behalf in respect of the proposal when dealing with officers and in public speaking at Committee.

3. Fettering Discretion in the Planning Process

(natural justice, predisposition and predetermination)

- **Don't** fetter your discretion and therefore your ability to participate in planning decision making at this Council by approaching the decision with a closed mind. Fettering your discretion in this way and taking part in the decision will put the Council at risk of a finding of maladministration and of legal proceedings on the grounds of bias, pre-

determination or a failure to take into account all of the factors enabling the proposal to be considered on its merits.

- **Do** be aware that in your role as an elected Member you are entitled, and are often expected, to have expressed views on planning issues and that these comments have an added measure of protection under the law. Your prior observations, apparent favouring or objections in respect of a particular outcome will not on their own normally suffice to make a decision unlawful and have it quashed, but you must never come to make a decision with a closed mind.

- **Do** keep at the front of your mind that, when you come to make the decision, you

  - must keep an open mind and hear all of the evidence before you, both the officers' presentation of the facts and their advice and the arguments from all sides;

  - are not required to cast aside views on planning policy you held when seeking election or when otherwise acting as a Member, in giving fair consideration to points raised;

  - are only entitled to take account a material consideration and must disregard considerations irrelevant to the question and legal context at hand; and

  - are to come to a decision after giving what you feel is the right weight to those material considerations.

- **Do** be aware that you can be biased where the Council is the landowner, developer or applicant and you have acted as, or could be perceived as being, a chief advocate for the proposal. (This is more than a matter of membership of both the proposing and planning determination committees, but that through your significant personal involvement in preparing or advocating the proposal you will be, or perceived by the public as being, no longer able to act impartially or to determine the proposal purely on its planning merits.)

- **Do** consider yourself able to take part in the debate on a proposal when acting as part of a consultee body (where you are also a member of the parish council, for example, or both a district/borough and county councillor), provided:

  - the proposal does not substantially effect the well being or financial standing of the consultee body;

  - you make it clear to the consultee body that:

    - your views are expressed on the limited information before you only;

    - you must reserve judgement and the independence to make up your own mind on each separate proposal, based on your overriding duty to the whole community and not just to the people in that area, ward or parish, as and when it comes before the Committee and you hear all of the relevant information; and

  - you will not in any way commit yourself as to how you or others may vote when the proposal comes before the Committee.

- **Do** explain that you do not intend to speak and vote as a member of the Committee because you will be perceived as having judged (or you reserve the right to judge) the matter elsewhere, so that this may be recorded in the minutes. (*Use the disclosure form provided for disclosing interests.)*
- **Do** take the opportunity to exercise your separate speaking rights as a Ward/Local Member (*where this is granted by the authority's standing orders or by the consent from the Chair and Committee***)** where you have represented your views or those of local electors and fettered your discretion, but do not have a disclosable or other personal conflict of interest. Where you do:
  - advise the proper officer or Chair that you wish to speak in this capacity before commencement of the item;
  - remove yourself from the seating area for members of the Committee for the duration of that item; and
  - ensure that your actions are recorded in accordance with the Authority's committee procedures.

4. Contact with Applicants, Developers and Objectors

Local Authorities are to enter into pre-application discussions with potential applicants. In addition negotiations and discussions are likely to be ongoing after an individual application has been submitted. Such discussions can often be interpreted by the public (and especially objectors) as prejudicing the planning decision-making process.

There will also be discussions and meetings on strategic plans for the Council (e.g. matters arising from the local plan or major development sites). Such strategic discussions lie within the remit of the Cabinet/Executive Member(s) and may be distinguished from discussions on specific planning applications, and therefore not subject to the caveat set out below.

In order to allay such perceptions all discussions should take place within clear guidelines.

- **Do** refer those who approach you for planning, procedural or technical advice to officers.
- **Don't** agree to any formal meeting with applicants, developers or groups of objectors where you can avoid it. Where you feel that a formal meeting would be useful in clarifying the issues, you should seek to arrange that meeting yourself through a request to the Development Control Manager to organise it. The officer(s) will then ensure that those present at the meeting are advised from the start that the discussions will not bind the authority to any particular course of action, that the meeting is properly recorded on the application file and the record of the meeting is disclosed when the application is considered by the Committee.

- **Do** otherwise:
  - follow the rules on lobbying;
  - consider whether or not it would be prudent in the circumstances to make notes when contacted; and
  - report to the Development Control Manager any significant contact with the applicant and other parties, explaining the nature and purpose of the contacts and your involvement in them, and ensure that this is recorded on the planning file.

In addition in respect of presentations by applicants/developers:

- **Don't** attend a planning presentation without requesting an officer to be present.
- **Do** ask relevant questions for the purposes of clarifying your understanding of the proposals.
- **Do** remember that the presentation is not part of the formal process of debate and determination of any subsequent application, this will be carried out by the appropriate Committee of the planning authority.
- **Do** be aware that a presentation is a form of lobbying and, whilst you may express any view on the merits or otherwise of the proposal presented, you should never state how you or other Members would intend to vote at a committee.

5. Lobbying of Councillors

- **Do** explain to those lobbying or attempting to lobby you that, whilst you can listen to what is said, it may subsequently prejudice your impartiality, and therefore your ability to participate in the Committee's decision making, to express an intention to vote one way or another or such a firm point of view that it amounts to the same thing.
- **Do** remember that your overriding duty is to the whole community not just to the people in your ward and, taking account of the need to make decisions impartially, that you should not improperly favour, or appear to improperly favour, any person, company, group or locality.
- **Don't** accept gifts or hospitality from any person involved in or affected by a planning proposal. If a degree of hospitality is entirely unavoidable, ensure it is of a minimum, its acceptance is declared as soon as possible, including its addition to your register of interests where relevant.
- **Do** copy or pass on any lobbying correspondence you receive to the Development Control Manager at the earliest opportunity.
- **Do** promptly refer to the Development Control Manager any offers made to you of planning gain or constraint of development, through a proposed s.106 Planning Obligation or otherwise.

- **Do** inform the Monitoring Officer where you feel you have been exposed to undue or excessive lobbying or approaches (including inappropriate offers of gifts or hospitality), who will in turn advise the appropriate officers to follow the matter up.
- **Do** note that, unless you have a disclosable or overriding other personal conflict of interest, you will not have fettered your discretion or breached this Planning Code through:
  - listening or receiving viewpoints from residents or other interested parties;
  - making comments to residents, interested parties, other Members or appropriate officers (making clear that you must keep an open mind);
  - seeking information through appropriate channels; or
  - being a vehicle for the expression of opinion of others in your role as a Ward Member.

6. Lobbying by Councillors

- **Don't** become a member of, lead or represent an organisation whose primary purpose is to lobby to promote or oppose planning proposals. If you do, you will be seen to have fettered your discretion on the grounds of bias.
- **Do** join general interest groups which reflect your areas of interest and which concentrate on issues beyond particular planning proposals, such as the Victorian Society, CPRE, Ramblers Association or a local civic society, but you should normally disclose that interest on the grounds of transparency where the organisation has made representations on a particular proposal and make it clear to that organisation and the Committee that you have reserved judgement and the independence to make up your own mind on each separate proposal.
- **Don't** excessively lobby fellow councillors regarding your concerns or views nor attempt to persuade them that they should decide how to vote in advance of the meeting at which any planning decision is to be taken.
- **Do** be aware of the power of social media posts or re-posting and be careful to not to give the impression that you will definitively vote in a certain way or act with a closed mind if you intend to participate in the decision making on behalf of the authority.
- **Don't** decide or discuss how to vote on any application at any sort of political group meeting, or lobby any other Member to do so. Political Group Meetings should never dictate how Members should vote on a planning issue.

7. Site Visits/Inspections

Sites inspection by Committee members as a group can be helpful in reaching a decision on issues where site circumstances are clearly fundamental to that decision. This is true particularly when the issues concern visual impact, the character of an historic building or

the effect of development on local amenities. Site visits should be held when inspection of the site is relevant to the material considerations.

The decision on whether to agree a site visit lies with the Committee, unless directly referred by the Executive Director of Place. The reasons relating to the above criteria must be stated and will be minuted and will form the basis of the inspection. The inspection will not itself be a committee meeting, and the decision on any application which is the subject of a site inspection will only be made at a committee meeting.

- **Do** try to attend site visits organised by the Council where possible.
- **Don't** request a site visit unless you feel it is strictly necessary because:
  - particular site factors are significant in terms of the weight attached to them relative to other factors or the difficulty of their assessment in the absence of a site inspection; or
  - there are significant policy or precedent implications and specific site factors need to be carefully addressed.
- **Do** ensure that you report back to the Committee any information gained from the site visit that you feel would benefit all Members of the Committee
- **Do** ensure that you treat the site visit only as an opportunity to seek information and to observe the site.
- **Do** ask the officers at the site visit questions or seek clarification from them on matters which are relevant to the site inspection.
- **Don't** hear representations from any other party, with the exception of those permitted to address the site inspection by the Chair (in accordance with Appendix 2), whose address must focus only on site factors and site issues. Where you are approached by the applicant or a third party, advise them that they should make representations in writing to the authority and direct them to or inform the officer present.
- **Don't** express opinions or views.
- **Don't** enter a site which is subject to a proposal other than as part of an official site visit**,** even in response to an invitation, as this may give the impression of bias unless:
  - you feel it is essential for you to visit the site other than through attending the official site visit,
  - you have first spoken to the Development Control Manager bout your intention to do so and why (which will be recorded on the file) and
  - you can ensure you will comply with these good practice rules on site visits.

8. Public Speaking at Meetings

- **Don't** allow members of the public to communicate with you during the Committee's proceedings (orally, in writing or by social media) other than through the scheme for public speaking or through the Chair, as this may give the appearance of bias.
- **Don't** participate in social media or exchanges by texting as a member of the committee during the committee's proceedings as this may give the impression of undue external influence and may give the appearance of bias.
- **Do** ensure that you comply with the Council's procedures in respect of public speaking.

9. Officers

- **Don't** put pressure on officers to put forward a particular recommendation. (This does not prevent you from asking questions or submitting views to the Development Control Manager, which may be incorporated into any committee report).
- **Do** recognise that officers are part of a management structure and only discuss a proposal, outside of any arranged meeting, with a Head of Service or those officers who are authorised by their Head of Service to deal with the proposal at a Member level.
- **Do** recognise and respect that officers involved in the processing and determination of planning matters must act in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for Officers and their professional codes of conduct, primarily the Royal Town Planning Institute's Code of Professional Conduct. As a result, planning officers' views, opinions and recommendations will be presented on the basis of their overriding obligation of professional independence, which may on occasion be at odds with the views, opinions or decisions of the Committee or its Members.

10. Decision Making

A decision on a planning application cannot be made before the committee meeting until all of the relevant information is to hand, any political group meeting prior to a Committee meeting should not be used to decide how Councillors should vote. Accordingly Agenda Briefing meetings and any pre-Committee meetings will solely be for the purpose of enabling an exchange of briefing material between Officers and Members on planning issues of concern in relation to particular applications, and will be open to Members of all political groups.

All applications considered by the relevant Planning Committee or by a report on the Circulated Schedule shall be the subject of written reports and clear recommendations. If the recommendations are contrary to the provisions of the Development Plan the material considerations which justify this shall be clearly stated.

If in the view of the officer the matter is finely balanced the report will say so. The recommendations put forward by officers and the decision by members are separate parts of

the same process which should be justified by the report and debate respectively. The conduct of the meeting will be in accordance with the protocol at Appendix 1.

- **Do** ensure that, if you request a proposal to go before the Committee rather than be determined through officer delegation, that your planning reasons are recorded and repeated in the report to the Committee.
- **Do** come to meetings with an open mind and demonstrate that you are open-minded.
- **Do** comply with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and make decisions in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- **Do** come to your decision only after due consideration of all of the information reasonably required upon which to base a decision. If you feel there is insufficient time to digest new information or that there is simply insufficient information before you, request that further information. If necessary, defer or refuse.
- **Don't** vote or take part in the meeting's discussion on a proposal unless you have been present to hear the entire debate, including the officers' introduction to the matter. (Where a matter is deferred and its consideration recommences at a subsequent meeting, only Members who were present at the previous meeting will be able to vote. If this renders the Committee inquorate then the item will have to be considered afresh and this would include public speaking rights being triggered again).
- **Do** have recorded the reasons for Committee's decision to defer any proposal [and that this is in accordance with the Council's protocol on deferrals].
- **Do** make sure that if you are proposing, seconding or supporting a decision contrary to officer recommendations or the development plan that you clearly identify and understand the planning reasons leading to this conclusion/decision. These reasons must be given prior to the vote and be recorded (it will help to take advice from officers when and where necessary to do this and, if there are no indications allowing you to do this in advance of the meeting, it may be helpful to request a short adjournment for these purposes). Be aware that you may have to justify the resulting decision by giving evidence in the event of any challenge.

11. Training

Training on planning matters will be made available at convenient times for all Members of the Council, and in particular those serving on the Planning Committee. All Members serving on a Planning Committee and/or who have any decision-making role on planning matters shall agree to be trained in planning procedures prior to serving on the Committee.

- **Don't** participate in decision making at meetings dealing with planning matters if you have not attended the mandatory planning training prescribed by the Council.

- **Do** endeavour to attend any other specialised training sessions provided, since these will be designed to extend your knowledge of planning law, regulations, procedures, Codes of Practice and the Development Plans beyond the minimum referred to above and thus assist you in carrying out your role properly and effectively.
- **Do** participate in the annual review of a sample of planning decisions to ensure that Members` judgements have been based on proper planning considerations.

APPENDIX 1

Protocol for Committees Discharging Planning Functions

All Committee meetings shall be conducted in a professional, courteous and transparent manner. It is recognised that Planning Committees often have to weigh the balance of material considerations in determining applications and it is particularly important that in exercising its decision making powers the reasons for decisions are clear to all concerned. The following protocol for committee meetings will apply:

1. Meetings will commence with an explanation to visitors as to how committee will operate

2. During public speaking, the chair will ensure no comments of a personal or offensive nature are made

3. The chair will seek to ensure debates on applications are structured and managed to ensure a coherent, transparent decision making process and that the business of the meeting is conducted in an efficient and professional manner. The arrangement of business will be at the discretion of the chair.

4. The chair will seek to ensure members and officers are treated in accordance with the Council's agreed protocol for working arrangements between members and officers, with particular regard to:

- The political neutrality of officers
- The independence of officers
- Mutual respect, courtesy, civility and professionalism with respect for differing views

5. Officers will be invited to briefly introduce each item and where appropriate they will:

- Highlight the key points on the decision to be made
- Verbally update on late responses/amended plans etc
- Refer to any specific comments made in the public speaking session

6. The chair will seek to ensure debates are kept to those planning and transportation matters of relevance to the decision seeking to avoid repetition or irrelevant debate

7. When members do not intend to follow officer advice, members will be asked to present clear justification for the decisions they intend to take so that full reasons may be recorded in the minutes.

8. Officers will provide general advice and assistance to the Committee on procedural or other issues.

APPENDIX 2

Sites Inspection Procedure

Sites inspection by Committee members as a group can be helpful in reaching a decision on issues where site circumstances are clearly fundamental to that decision.

The inspection is not a meeting of the Committee and no representations will be received from any Party during the site inspection.

A decision on any application, which is the subject of a site inspection, will only be made at a committee meeting.

1. Site visits will be conducted in an organised, professional, courteous, fair and transparent manner.

2. The Committee members, local members and Parish/Town Council will be advised at the time of an individual site inspection. Such notification will make clear the purpose of the site visit.

3. The Chair of the meeting will commence with an explanation to all those attending site visit as to how the visit will be conducted.

4. If appropriate, following advice from the case officer, the Chair of the meeting will invite comments, limited to site specific observations and information, from: Ward Member(s), the Parish / Town Council representative, one representative of the Applicant and one representative from those opposed (if any) (the **Attendees**).

In the event that either the Applicant or those opposed to the application are not present, the Chair will (having received further advice from the case officer) give consideration as to whether only the Ward Member(s) and Parish / Town Council representative will be invited to make comments. The reasons for the Chair's decision will be recorded and reported to the formal meeting of Committee.

5. The visit will follow a structured format as follows:-

- If the Committee has referred the application for an inspection, officers will highlight those issues identified by the Committee which made the referral.

- If the Director in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation has referred the matter for inspection, the case officer will highlight the specific issues for consideration.

- If invited each Attendee will then be permitted to make any comments not exceeding 3 minutes (such comments to be limited to observations and information specific to the site).

- Members may then ask officers any questions for the purpose of clarification. There will be no debate. All questions will be directed through the Chair of the site visit.

- There will be no debate about the merits of the application and no decision will be made during the site inspection.

- Officers will prepare an action note of the inspection and include the detail in an updated committee report.

- No hospitality will be accepted.

Member / Officer Protocol

Introduction

1. Councillors are democratically accountable and have political affiliations. Officers must serve the whole Council objectively. Together they must balance a complex range of obligations and competing interests. For this to be effective Members and officers must have mutual trust and respect for each other's requirements and duties. There must also be transparent consistency in every day working relationships.

2. The Council has formally adopted a Code of Conduct which sets out the minimum standards Councillors and co-opted members must observe. This Protocol operates within that framework and provides the Council's local ground rules.

3. Councillors, co-opted members and officers agree to observe the Code and this Protocol and to be guided by them in the interests of fair treatment and good government.

4. The Protocol is the Council's way of applying the following basic principles:

   Members have a right to sufficient information and support to enable them to make informed decisions. At common law, this is referred to as "need to know".

   The need is so that they can perform their role as a Councillor. It can be limited by conflict of interest, confidentiality and practicality.

   Officers must serve the whole Council objectively.

   They must therefore provide "unified advice" at all times. This is advice which is objective, consistent and points out all relevant factors. Different points of view between officers should be resolved or presented in a balanced way which helps Members to choose between them.

   Political processes and different roles of Members are a legitimate part of local democracy

   Officers advice and support can be tailored accordingly. A party group is entitled to the confidentiality of officer advice on developing policies. The overall arrangements for officer advice must be transparent.

The relationship: general points

5. Both Members and officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another. But their responsibilities are distinct. Members are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office

lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice to Members and the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council, Members, their committees and sub committees.

6. At the heart of the Code, and this Protocol, is the importance of mutual respect. Member/officer relationships should be conducted in a positive and constructive way. Therefore, it is important that any dealings between Members and officers should observe standards of courtesy and that neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position or seek to exert undue influence on the other party.

7. Inappropriate relationships can be inferred from language/style. Therefore Members and officers should always seek to address each other with courtesy.

8. A Member should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an officer in a manner that is incompatible with the objectives of this Protocol. This is a long-standing tradition in public service. An officer has no means of responding to such criticism in public. If a Member feels she/he has not been treated with proper respect, courtesy or has any concern about the conduct or capability of an officer, and fails to resolve it through direct discussion with the officer, she/he should raise the matter with the respective Head of Service. The Head of Service will then look into the facts and report back to the Member. If the Member continues to feel concern, then she/he should report the facts to the Director who heads the Directorate concerned, or if, after doing so, is still dissatisfied, should raise the issue with the Chief Executive who will look into the matter afresh. Any action taken against an officer in respect of a complaint will be in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Disciplinary and Capability Procedures.

9. An officer should not raise, in public with a Member, matters relating to the conduct or capability of another officer or the internal management of a Section/Division/Directorate in a manner that is incompatible with the overall objectives of this Protocol. If such issues are raised by Members then the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the Employees' Code of Conduct and the Council's Disciplinary Rules and Procedures. Unwarranted criticism of officers by Members should be avoided, particularly when they cannot respond on equal terms such as at public Council meetings.

10. Where an officer feels that she/he has not been properly treated with respect and courtesy by a Member, she/he should raise the matter with his/her Head of Service or Director, especially if they do not feel able to discuss it directly with the Member concerned. In these circumstances the Head of Service or Director will take appropriate action either by approaching the individual Member and/or Group Leader. The Director will inform the Chief Executive if the party Group Leader does become involved, or as the Director feels appropriate. If the matter cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the employee

concerned and their Director the matter will be treated as a grievance and dealt with under the Council's formal grievance and harassment procedures.

The relationship: officer support to members: general points

11. Members are democratically accountable and have political affiliations. They have a clear role in providing leadership within the community and as Ward Councillors to represent their constituents. Officers are responsible for day-to-day managerial and operational decisions within the authority and provide services to the local community.

12. Certain statutory officers – the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer – have specific roles. These are addressed in the Constitution. Their roles need to be understood and respected by all Members.

13. The following key principles reflect the way in which the officer core generally relates to Members:

    - all officers are employed by, and accountable to the authority as a whole;

    - support from officers is needed for all the authority's functions including Full Council, Committees Area Forums & individual Members representing their communities.

14. Members are responsible for providing leadership and direction on policy matters. Day to day managerial and operational decisions on the delivery of services should remain the responsibility of the Chief Executive and other officers.

15. On occasion, a decision may be reached which authorises named officers to take action between meetings following consultation with a Member or Members. It must be recognised that it is the officer, rather than the Member or Members, who takes the action and it is the Member who is accountable for it.

16. Finally, it must be remembered that officers within a Division or Directorate are accountable to their Head of Service and Director and that whilst officers should always seek to assist a Member, they must not, in so doing, go beyond the bounds of whatever authority they have been given by their Head of Service or Director.

The relationship: officer support: members and party groups

17. It must be recognised by all officers and Members that in discharging their duties and responsibilities, officers serve the Council as a whole and not any political group, combination of groups or any individual Member of the Council. However, political assistants appointed under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are not required to maintain political neutrality, since their role is to support the political group on whose behalf they have been engaged. Consequently such officers may be exempted from the constraints on officer neutrality set out below.

18. There is statutory recognition for party groups and it is common practice for such groups to give preliminary consideration to matters of Council business in advance of such matters being considered by the relevant Council decision making body. Officers may properly be called upon to support and contribute to such deliberations by party groups but must at all times maintain political neutrality. All officers must, in their dealings with political groups and individual Members, treat them in a fair and even-handed manner.

19. Certain points must, however, be clearly understood by all those participating in this type of process, Members and officers alike. In particular:

- the observance of neutrality will be assisted if officers only attend party group meetings for specified business and officers withdraw from the meeting after briefing and any questions and before political discussion.

- party group meetings, whilst they form part of the preliminaries to Council decision making, are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council. Conclusions reached at such meetings do not therefore rank as Council decisions and it is essential that they are not interpreted or acted upon as such; and

- similarly, where officers provide information and advice to a party group meeting in relation to a matter of Council business, this cannot act as a substitute for providing all necessary information and advice to the Council relevant Committee or Sub-Committee when the matter in question is considered.

20. Special care needs to be exercised whenever officers are involved in providing information and advice to a party group meeting which includes persons who are not Members of the Council. Such persons are not bound by the Code of Conduct for Members (in particular, the provisions concerning the declaration of interests and confidentiality) and for this and other reasons officers must be cautious about attending and/or giving advice to such meetings.

21. Officers must respect the confidentiality of any party group discussions at which they are present in the sense that they should not relay the content of any such discussion to another party group.

22. Whilst any Member may ask a relevant Head of Service, Director or the Chief Executive for written factual information about a Directorate or service, such requests must be reasonable and not seek information relating, for instance, to case work of a confidential nature, egg Social Services, employment etc. Requests will be met subject to any overriding legal considerations (which will be determined by the Service Director of Legal, Governance and Democratic Services), or if the recipient of any request considers the cost of providing the information requested or the nature of the request to be unreasonable. If a Member requesting such information is dissatisfied by such a response, she/he should raise the matter in the first place with the relevant Director, and if still dissatisfied should raise the matter with the Chief Executive who will discuss the issue with the relevant Group Leader(s).

23. It must not be assumed by any party group or Member that any officer is supportive of any policy or strategy developed because of that officer's assistance in the formulation of that policy or strategy.

24. If any Member or officer experiences any particular case of difficulty or uncertainty in this area of officer advice to party groups they should raise the matter with the Chief Executive who will discuss them with the relevant Group Leaders.

Support services to members and party groups

25. The only basis on which the Council can lawfully provide support services (e.g. stationery, typing, printing, photocopying, transport etc) to Members is to assist them in discharging their role as Members of the Council. Such support services must therefore only be used on Council business. They should never be used in connection with party political or campaigning activity or for private purposes.

Members' access to information and to council documents

26. Members have the ability to ask for information in accordance with their legal rights. This right extends to such information, explanation and advice as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in discharging their role as a Member of the Council. This can range from a request for general information about some aspect of the Council's activities to a request for specific information on behalf of a constituent. Such approaches should normally be directed to the Head of Service or another senior officer of the Division concerned. In cases of doubt, Members should approach the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Democratic Services for assistance.

27. As regards the legal rights of Members to inspect Council documents, these are covered partly by statute and partly by the common law.

28. Members have a statutory rights to inspect any Council document which contains material relating to any business which is to be transacted by the Council. This right applies irrespective of whether the Member is a Member of the Committee or Sub-Committee concerned and extends not only to reports which are to be submitted to the meeting, but also to any relevant background papers. This right does not, however, apply to documents relating to certain items which may appear as a confidential (gold) item on the agenda for a meeting. The items in question are those which contain exempt information relating to employees, occupiers of Council property, applicants for grants and other services, the care of children and the vulnerable, contract and industrial relations negotiations, advice from Counsel and criminal investigations.

29. The common law rights of Members remains intact, are much broader and are based on the principle that any Member has a right to inspect Council documents so far as his/her access to the document is reasonably necessary to enable the Members properly to perform his/her duties as a Member of the Council. This principle is commonly referred to as the 'need to know' principle.

30. The exercise of this common law right depends therefore, upon an individual Member being able to demonstrate that she/he has the necessary 'need to know'. In this respect a Member has no right to 'a roving commission' to go and examine documents of the Council. Mere curiosity is not sufficient. The crucial question is the determination of the 'need to know'. This question must initially be determined by the particular Head of Service whose Division holds the document in question (with advice from the Service Director – Legal, Governance Head of Legal and Democratic Services). In the event of dispute, the question falls to be determined by the Service Director – Legal, Governance Head of Legal & Democratic Services in association with the relevant Director.

31. In some circumstances (e.g., a Committee Member wishing to inspect documents relating to the business of a Committee) a Member's 'need to know' will normally be presumed. In other circumstances (e.g., a Member wishing to inspect documents which contain personal information about third parties) the Member will normally be expected to justify the request in specific terms. Furthermore, there will be a range of documents which, because of their nature are either not accessible to Members.

32. Whilst the term 'Council document' is very broad and includes for example, any document produced with Council resources, it is accepted by convention that a Member of one party group will not have a 'need to know' and therefore, a right to inspect, a document which forms part of the internal workings of another party group.

33. Further and more detailed advice regarding Members rights to inspect Council documents may be obtained from the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Democratic Services.

34. Finally, any Council information provided to a Member must only be used by the Member for the purpose for which it was provided, i.e. in connection with the proper performance of the Member's duties as a Member of the Council. Therefore, for example, early drafts of Committee reports/briefing papers are not suitable for public disclosure and should not be used other than for the purpose for which they were supplied.

Correspondence

35. Correspondence between an individual Member and an officer should not normally be copied (by the officer) to any other Member without the consent of that Member. Correspondence includes both hard copy memoranda or letters and e-mail.

36. Most official letters on behalf of the Council will normally be sent in the name of the appropriate officer rather in the name of a Member, particularly when dealing with operational or service delivery matters. However it will be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. representations to Government) for correspondence to be sent in the name of Member or the Leader of Council. Letters which create legal obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council and which are sent out in the name of a Member should always be agreed in consultation with the Chief Executive or the relevant Director, and on legal matters on advice from the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Democratic Services.

Publicity and press releases

37. Local authorities are accountable to their electorate. Accountability requires local understanding. This will be promoted by the Authority, explaining its objectives and policies to the electors and rate-payers. In recent years, all local authorities have increasingly used publicity to keep the public informed and to encourage public participation. Every Council needs to tell the public about the services it provides. Increasingly, local authorities see this task as an essential part of providing services. Good, effective publicity aimed to improve public awareness of a Council's activities is to be welcomed.

38. Publicity is, however, a sensitive matter in any political environment because of the impact it can have. Expenditure on publicity can be significant. It is essential, therefore, to ensure that local authority decisions on publicity are properly made in accordance with clear principles of good practice. The Government has issued a code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. The purpose of the Code is to set out such principles.

39. The Code affects the conventions that should apply to all publicity at public expense and which traditionally have applied in both central and local government. The Code requires that all local authorities shall have regard to its provisions in coming to any decision on publicity.

40. Officers and Members of the Council will, therefore, in making decisions on publicity, take account of the provisions of this Code. If in doubt, officers and/or Members should initially seek advice from the Corporate Communications Manager who will refer the matter to the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Democratic Services, if necessary/appropriate. Particular care should be paid to any publicity used by the Council around the time of an election. Particular advice will be given on this by the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Democratic Services as appropriate.

41. For the sake of clarity the Code does not apply to press releases and publicity that Members may arrange and distribute in their individual political capacity rather than through the Council. Members should not use council resources for party political purposes.

Involvement of ward councillors

42. It is a fundamental principle that Ward Councillors should be consulted and provided with information on all matters to enable them to properly fulfil their role in representing their constituents. The Council's Standing Orders make specific requirements on officers to properly consult with Ward Members and in particular:

- Officers should always consider whether policy or briefing papers or other topics being discussed with another Member should be discussed with the relevant Ward Member. Officers should seek the views of the appropriate other Member as to with whom and when this might be done.

- Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue, all the Members representing the Ward or Wards affected should, as a matter of course, be invited to attend that meeting.

- Whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultative exercise of a local issue the Ward Member should be notified at the outset of the exercise and be offered full facilities to take part in the consultation exercise.

Conclusion

43. Mutual understanding, openness on these sort of sensitive issues and basic respect are the greatest safeguard of the integrity of the Council, its Members and officers.

Officer/member protocol

44. Copies of the Protocol will be issued to all Members as part of the Constitution upon election.

45. Questions of interpretation of this Protocol will be determined by the Head of Legal, Governance and Democratic Services.

South Gloucestershire Council

Delivering for you

Media protocol (May 2026)

Section	Title
1	Introduction
2	The legal context
3	Our approach to media relations
4	The media
5	Communications planning
6	Roles and responsibilities
7	Handling media enquiries
8	Media releases
9	Media interviews
10	Media handling and council meetings
11	Impartiality principle
12	Party political issues
13	Publicity in pre-election periods
14	Schools
15	Partnerships
16	Non-Council related media activity
17	Managing negative issues
18	Correcting inaccurate reporting
19	When the council gets it wrong
20	Leaked documents
21	Events photography and video

22	**Monitoring and evaluation**
23	**Complaints**

Introduction

1.1 This protocol explains how South Gloucestershire Council manages media activity, including proactive communications, media enquiries, interviews, publicity during politically sensitive periods, and the handling of negative or inaccurate coverage. It is intended for officers, Members, schools, partners and others who may be involved in media activity connected to the council.

1.2 To make sure all activity is managed effectively it is important that it is managed via a central point – the Strategic Communications team.

1.3 The only exceptions to this are: publicity of a political nature, which is handled by the individual political groups, and some publicity relating to schools. Academies are primarily responsible for their own communications although media support may be provided by the Strategic Communications team in times of crisis.

1.4 The purpose of this protocol is to clearly explain the roles and responsibilities of all officers and Members involved in dealing with the media and to outline the processes to be followed and constraints that apply.

1.5 For the purposes of this protocol, the following definitions apply:

i The SGC Communications Strategy sets out the approaches adopted by the council's communication function in pursuing its communications objectives,

ii 'Political' in this context refers to items considered to be of a party-political nature, as opposed to the policy or service delivery of the council itself,

iii 'Corporate' refers to the operational activity and established policy of the council,

iv 'Policy' is a formally adopted approach to guide decisions and achieve specific outcomes,

v 'Portfolio' relates to the appointed focus area of a Cabinet Member

vi 'Officers' refers to council staff.

The legal context

2.1 This protocol reflects the guidance contained in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011 (as amended). This Code sets out a range of provisions in relation to local authority publicity. These provisions include the seven principles of local authority publicity, namely that it should be lawful, cost effective, objective, even-handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity, and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

2.2 The provisions also include statements of the actions a local authority should or should not take in order to comply with the principles, including in relation to the principle of objectivity a statement that a local authority should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or in relation to the appropriateness principle statements about the frequency, content and appearance of local authority newssheets or similar communications.

2.3 This protocol is also shaped by the Government Communication Service Propriety Guidance which provides a comprehensive guide on best practice for how Government communicators must carry out their work objectively and without political bias.[1]

2.4 In line with the principle outlined in section 2.1, all publicity will be produced in line with the council's equalities policies.

Our approach to media relations

3.1 The media plays a key role in informing residents about what the council does and how it spends their money. It is therefore vital that we communicate effectively with the media and carefully nurture effective relationships with journalists.

3.2 South Gloucestershire Council is committed to continuing to develop positive working relationships with the media as a vital channel of influence and reputation management and employs a team of experienced media relations specialists to manage this relationship, utilising their professional judgement in close dialogue with service leads, subject matter experts, the Strategic Leadership Team and the Administration.

3.3 All external agencies employed by the council to support the delivery of communications and engagement activity are subject to the oversight of the Strategic Communications team through Service Level Agreements which set out clear roles and responsibilities and address any resourcing shortfalls.

3.4 Wherever we can, we will take a positive approach to meeting media requests for information and interviews.

3.5 This approach will help us achieve the following objectives:

a. to ensure that the council is recognised as one which is open, accountable, flexible, customer-focused, accessible and a council which listens
b. to share and celebrate our successes
c. to help local people feel more informed about the council's work
d. to handle negative issues clearly and decisively.

The media

4 By media, this document refers to what is traditionally known as the mainstream news media – the umbrella term for all the sources and presentation of news and information, including: TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, web pages, social media and blogs.

Communications planning

5.1 Everyone in the council can play a role in identifying newsworthy items, flagging urgent risks to the Strategic Communications team directly and highlighting opportunities and risks through line management using the communications planner shared with

[1] Government Communication Service Propriety Guidance - GCS (civilservice.gov.uk)

Departmental Management Teams each week.

5.2 The Administration, Chief Officers and Service Directors/Service Managers have particular responsibility for notifying the Strategic Communications team of items of interest or risk. This should be done as early as possible.

5.3 Strategic Communications officers will attend, wherever possible, key meetings including Cabinet, Full Council and other relevant executive and non-executive committee meetings to identify items that may be of media interest.

5.4 The Strategic Communications team will offer advice about managing or promoting any communications issues and must be notified by staff of any potentially controversial policies, decisions or events well in advance, ideally through the communications planner shared weekly with Departmental Leadership Teams and the Administration.

Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Coordinating, planning, prioritising and managing all media relations, including handling interview bids and producing media releases, statements and lines to take, is the responsibility of the Strategic Communications team.

6.2 Sign-off of relevant media releases is subject to four interdependent approvals, depending on the subject and sensitivity of the release:

i. Cabinet Member for quotes, Cabinet decisions, policy and messaging related to their portfolio (cc'd relevant group Political Assistant or Leader in their absence)

ii. Other Members of the Administration as required for Cabinet decisions, policy and messaging related to their portfolio (cc'd relevant group Political Assistant or Leader in their absence)

iii. Service Director/Service Manager for technical details (escalated to Chief Officer for controversial subjects and cc'd to them on approval for information)

iv. Director of Strategy, Engagement & Change (or Head of Strategic Communications in their absence) for quality control, messaging/style and compliance with this media protocol document.

6.3 Those with sign-off responsibility must ensure that the Strategic Communications team has access to accurate information and support from staff within their departments. They may also be called upon to be (or asked to nominate) media interviewees when appropriate.

6.4 Officers should play an active role in the drafting of content, providing information and data as requested and making time for related filming and photography requests.

6.5 The relevant Cabinet Member will act as media interviewee on matters of policy and cabinet decisions related to their portfolio.

6.6 Media trained council staff will act as media interviewees on specialist, technical or operational matters. Media training will be undertaken by all Service Directors and Chief Officers.

Handling media enquiries

7.1 When the protocol references consulting/liaising with the Administration, this means via the relevant Cabinet Member and the relevant group Political Assistant.

7.2 In the absence of the relevant group Political Assistant, this will default to the Leader of the Council.

7.3 The Administration has the final decision on whether or not the council offers a response to any press enquiry concerning a policy or cabinet decision. In the event that no response is to be given, a reason for this must be supplied to the Strategic Communications team so that they can offer an explanation to the journalist.

7.4 All responses to press enquiries, concerning policy or a cabinet decision must be signed off by the Administration. If the relevant Cabinet Member is unavailable, the Strategic Communications team and the relevant Political Assistant may agree to proceed with an officer/spokesperson response.

7.5 Service Directors/Service Managers are responsible for signing off all routine technical or operational responses to enquiries. Chief Officers will assume responsibility for sign-off of controversial issues.

7.6 The Strategic Communications team will inform the Administration of media interest in high profile or controversial topics before responses are provided and for approval by the relevant Cabinet Member whenever this is practically possible without any significant impact on the issuing of a prompt response in order to manage the reputation of the council.

7.7 Any issue highlighted for response by a Cabinet Member will be subject to their approval before response, even if it is of a routine nature (i.e. normally covered by 7.5).

7.8 Officers who are directly approached by the media must not attempt to answer questions themselves. They should immediately refer the journalist to the Strategic Communications team, who will manage the response as per this protocol.

7.9 Members who are approached directly by the media, or via Political Assistants, should only respond in accordance with the guidance in this protocol. If they also hold an office, such as a Cabinet role, they must be explicit that they are responding as a Member and not in their Cabinet capacity. Members should alert Strategic Communications with their response. Cabinet Members approached for comment in their Cabinet capacity will be supported in providing statements, as outlined above.

7.10 Simple, factual queries can be dealt with by the Strategic Communications team. Where enquiries are covered by pre-agreed lines, Strategic Communications officers need not seek further clearance before responding to them.

7.11 Strategic Communications officers will advise the relevant Chief Officer, Service Director, Cabinet Member, relevant Political Assistants, and others as agreed with the relevant Political Assistants of media interest in issues of sensitivity, including where pre-agreed responses have been issued.

7.12 When seeking a response to an enquiry, Strategic Communications officers will advise other officers and Members of journalists' deadlines and strive to meet those deadlines wherever possible. Media enquiries are not the same as Freedom of Information requests and should not be treated as such. They are likely to have much shorter deadlines for response.

7.13 If the relevant officer or Member is unable to supply information for a response to a media enquiry within a journalist's stated deadline, the Strategic Communications team may issue statements which avoid detail, but which seek to protect the council's reputation – for example 'The matter will be investigated'.

7.14 The council will not normally comment on leaks, anonymous allegations or allegations about individual staff.

7.15 In all other circumstances, the phrase 'no comment' will not be used as a response to a media enquiry. The council is open and accountable and should always explain if there is a reason why it cannot answer a specific enquiry.

Media releases

8.1 Media releases are one of the key tools for publicising council activities, decisions and achievements.

8.2 All council media releases must be drafted in accordance with the council's agreed media release style guide.

8.3 The Strategic Communications team has sole responsibility for issuing media releases on behalf of the council.

8.4 All media releases will accurately reflect the corporate view of the council and will be politically impartial and evidence-based.

8.5 There is separate guidance in relation to political groups, which must be followed, in all cases, in section 11.

8.6 Where the Administration deems appropriate, it may request a corporate media release or statement to be formulated and issued on matters of importance to the community, provided it complies with 8.4 and 8.7.

8.7 Media releases will not promote the views of specific political groups, publicise the activities of individual Members or persuade the general public to hold a particular view unless part of an agreed marketing campaign.

8.8 All media releases will be published on the council's website by Strategic Communications. Reactive statements may also be posted on the council website. As appropriate, media releases and statements may also be promoted via the council's social media channels.

8.9 Strategic Communications officers will decide if a media release is appropriate and will prioritise as necessary, taking available resources into consideration. The Strategic Communications team will aim to accommodate all requests where reasonable, but this may not always be possible given resource constraints. Priority communications themes drawn from the council plan will be agreed with the Administration as part of the regular cycle of work.

8.10 The Strategic Communications team will support officers in drafting and publishing columns or other material that is in their individual name as a member of staff.

8.11 Statements from Members other than Members of the Administration may be included when those Members are:

- undertaking duties in the role of Chair of the Council
- commenting as the chair or South Gloucestershire representative of a partnership board or committee
- representing an area affected by a specific initiative/incident/emergency.

8.12 Proactive releases relating to council decisions and services will normally include a Member quote. A relevant officer may be quoted in releases or statements if the purpose is to provide factual information, add technical expertise to the commentary or if the appropriate Member is unavailable. The Strategic Communications team may also hold a media briefing to help journalists understand key issues or decision-making processes to which the appropriate Members and officers will be invited to participate.

8.13 Matters of style, presentation, punctuation, grammar etc are the responsibility of the Strategic Communications team and will follow the agreed council writing style guide.

8.14 Where it is relevant to the story, media releases may also include quotes from members of the public and others as agreed with the Political Assistants. In this scenario, particular attention will be paid to ensuring political impartiality.

Media interviews

9.1 Any officer contacted by a journalist requesting information or an interview should immediately refer the journalist to the Strategic Communications team.

9.2 In the event of the council's emergency plan being activated, Strategic Communications officers will follow the emergency media response plan.

9.3 As the public face of the council, there will be a general presumption in favour of Members being put forward for media interviews.

9.4 Officers will be put forward for interview where their technical or service knowledge will add most value to the portrayal of the story by the media or when the portfolio holding Cabinet Member is unavailable.

9.5 Only officers and Members who are media trained will be put forward for media interviews on behalf of the council.

9.6 All senior officers, Cabinet Members and the Chair of the Council are required to be media trained at least once every three years.

9.7 Members of the public or community representatives who contribute to a council media story will be offered appropriate support by the Strategic Communications team where it is needed.

9.8 Potential interviewees will be agreed prior to a media release being issued, based on relevance and availability. This may be adapted by the Strategic Communications team based on where media interest lies.

9.8.1 Officers should never give their opinion on specific council policy but must keep to the corporate line and key messages.

9.8.2 When commenting on an issue, the Cabinet Member for that policy area will usually be put forward. If neither the Cabinet Member, nor another Member of the Administration is available/contactable for interview at the requested time, it may be appropriate for an officer to be delegated, following the guidelines set out for officers above.

9.9 The Strategic Communications team will support interviewees preparing for media interviews. Support may include a verbal briefing or a written briefing note that includes background information, key lines to take and likely Q&As. The Strategic Communications team is also able to arrange 'refresher' media training if required.

Media handling and Council meetings

General guidance

All council papers, with the exception of exempt items, will be published on the council's website and may be accessed by local and regional media.

10.1 Broadcast coverage of public meetings is permitted. Journalists may attend with TV and radio equipment. The Strategic Communications team will undertake all liaison with journalists.

10.2 Journalists are permitted to quote both officers and Members who speak at public meetings without seeking permission. They may also undertake interviews following meetings and those interviewed must make clear in what capacity they are speaking (i.e. in a private capacity, as a Member of a political group, as the chair or as a Cabinet Member).

10.3 Journalists may approach officers for further information and/or interview following meetings. All such requests must be referred to Strategic Communications as described above.

Activity prior to meetings:

10.4 Strategic Communications staff will attend (virtually or in person), wherever possible, pre-agenda and agenda-setting meetings, to identify issues that may attract media interest, or which should be highlighted to the media prior to the meeting.

10.5 In addition, where possible, the Administration, Chief Officers and Service Directors/Service Managers should make the Strategic Communications team aware, at the earliest possible opportunity, of any potentially newsworthy items that are due to be considered.

10.6 When appropriate, and where other constraints have been considered, the Strategic Communications team will issue a media release or statement in advance of the meeting, in consultation with the Administration.

10.7 Prior to the meeting, quotes in any such releases should not express a view to a referred outcome of a meeting or decision.

10.8 Information relating to council reports will be embargoed until the publication of meeting papers.

10.9 Petitions, motions and questions from individual Members will not normally be publicised by Strategic Communications.

Council and Cabinet meetings

10.10 The process and principles are the same for Council and Cabinet meetings.

10.11 A media release or statement confirming the decisions taken at key meetings may be issued by the Strategic Communications team as appropriate. Such releases will reflect the current position of the council and Member quotes will not promote party political positions.

10.12 Parties may issue their own media statements to clarify political positions on issues, subject to the guidance set out in section 11 and related regulations.

Call-In of Decisions

10.13 The Strategic Communications team will be made aware by Legal & Democratic Services at the time a call-in is made. The team will also be notified how and when any decision on the outcome of the call-in is made. The team should also be kept informed of the timescales of decisions subject to call-in in order to best inform the media and public.

Scrutiny Commission

10.14 The basic process and principles are the same as for Council and Cabinet meetings.

10.15 The Chair of the Scrutiny Commission will represent the views/work of the scrutiny commission to the media. The post of chair has a non-political role when representing the views of the scrutiny commission.

Impartiality principle

11.1 All media releases and other publicity material will be produced by the Strategic Communications team on behalf of the council and will be impartial and non-political.

11.2 Every political group has the right to issue its own media information through its own channels and in line with the regulations concerning the council's decision-making process.

11.3 All media releases issued by individual groups or Members should be copied to the Strategic Communications team at or before issue. These releases will be held in strict confidence and are for information only.

11.4 All enquiries and interview requests resulting from group media releases will be handled by the relevant group Political Assistant who issued the release.

11.5 The Strategic Communications team will provide non-party political communications advice to all Members on request, but will not produce media releases for Members on individual ward or party political issues, or in advance of a decision of a properly constituted council meeting.

11.6 Members, including Cabinet Members, are free to produce media columns and opinion pieces in their own name, following the protocols set out in this document. This should be overseen by the relevant group Political Assistant, with copies supplied to the Strategic Communications team for information.

Party political issues

12.1 There are times when an issue becomes 'party political'. In such cases an official council response may be given in line with the corporate view of the council, and additionally as required under paragraph 18 (below) in order to correct inaccuracies, clarify facts, and establish the council's position on decisions which have been taken. Political groups can also comment directly as per 11.2.

Publicity in pre-election periods

13.1 The rules governing publicity change when an election has been announced. In the period between the notice of an election and the election itself, all proactive publicity about candidates or other politicians is mandatorily halted. This applies to local, national and other elections.

13.2 During this period, council publicity must not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in a way that identifies them with individual Members or groups of Members. This is to make sure that no individual candidate or political party gains an unfair advantage by appearing in council funded publicity.

13.3 In these circumstances, where a quote is required, the relevant officer may be quoted, in accordance with the guidelines above.

13.4 Proactive events arranged in this period must not involve Members likely to be standing for election.

13.5 However, the exception is during a major emergency situation. Members holding key political or civic positions will be able to comment in an emergency via the Strategic Communications team.

13.6 Advice on publicity during election periods is available from the Monitoring Officer as well as the Strategic Communications team.

Schools

14.1 This protocol also applies to schools staff who are employed by the council and paragraphs 14.1 to 14.4 specifically apply to this group. Governors are encouraged to have regard to the protocol.

14.2 Maintained schools are encouraged to develop good relationships with their local media. They should be proactive and avoid conflict. Media releases can be issued directly by maintained schools, but should be copied to the Strategic Communications team in advance or at time of issue. Alternatively, media releases can be issued on behalf of maintained schools by the Strategic Communications team when required.

14.3 Schools should always alert the Strategic Communications team to any controversial issues at the earliest possible opportunity – preferably before journalists have picked up on the story. Information supplied to the Strategic Communications team in this way will be held in confidence and only used to inform future media statements or releases. The Strategic Communications team will actively support schools dealing with controversial issues and in these circumstances, will manage the media for them.

14.4 Media training is available to schools staff employed by the council on request. Advice is always available by telephone during office hours. In an emergency, out of hours assistance is available through the council's emergency procedures.

14.5 The Strategic Communications team may assist Academies in certain circumstances. This support is chargeable.

Partnerships

15.1 Where the council is involved in issuing a media release as part of a partnership or funding agreement, the partnership's arrangements for who to quote must be followed. From the council's perspective, this arrangement should align with the protocols laid out in this document.

15.2 In the case of a media release being prepared on behalf of a number of partners, it may be appropriate to offer each partner an opportunity to be quoted. All partners should be given an opportunity to approve the release within a stated and realistic time-frame. These arrangements should normally be set out in advance as part of the partnership or funding agreement.

Non-council related media activity

16.1 Officers and Members of the council who have contact with the media in a personal capacity or as members of non-council related organisations must not refer to their council posts. Where this becomes apparent, they must make it clear to the journalist concerned that they are speaking in a personal capacity or on behalf of the organisation, and not the council.

16.2 Trade union officers who are employees of the council and who have contact with the media in their trade union capacity must make clear that they are speaking as a union representative. If trade union officers have contact with the media in their capacity as a council employee, then the relevant provisions of this protocol relating to council officers will apply.

Managing negative issues

17.1 From time to time, the council has to respond to negative issues of interest to the media. It is important that Strategic Communications manages these situations to limit the potential for negative publicity.

17.2 Members, Chief Officers and Service Directors/Service Managers must alert the Strategic Communications team as soon as a potential negative issue that may attract media interest comes to light. They should not wait until contacted by the media.

17.3 Members, Chief Officers and Service Directors/Service Managers must be prepared to work with the Strategic Communications team to prepare holding statements and other materials, even if no media outlets have contacted the council about an issue.

Correcting inaccurate reporting

18.1 As set out above, the Strategic Communications team works to develop positive relationships with journalists working in key outlets throughout the district and wider region. Strong, positive working relationships are key to handling issues and being able to quickly remediate any inaccuracies in reporting.

18.2 The council recognises that the media carries a diverse range of opinion from a range of sources but will act promptly to correct significant inaccuracies or misrepresentations in media coverage.

18.3 In doing so, the council will be guided by the Editors' Code of Practice[2] set out by the Independent Press Standards Organisation, or other similar charter to which that outlet belongs.

18.4 In such circumstances, the Strategic Communications team will proactively lead discussions to determine the best course of action and will seek to address inaccuracies or misrepresentation via the following escalation routes:

18.4.1 a conversation with the journalist concerned,
18.4.2 a personal letter to the editor from the Head of Strategic Communications (Service Director Strategy Engagement & Change in their absence)
18.4.3 a formal letter to the editor from a Chief Officer

[2] Editors' Code of Practice (ipso.co.uk)

18.4.4 a formal complaint to IPSO or similar
18.4.5 legal advice and possible action.

18.5 Officers will act as the spokesperson on any factual inaccuracy and the appropriate Cabinet Member will be quoted should a comment be required.

18.6 In the case of minor inaccuracies, it will be at the discretion of the Strategic Communications team in consultation with the Administration, wherever practically possible, whether any action should be taken.

18.7 The Strategic Communications team will liaise with Legal & Democratic Services should any issue seem likely to escalate to complaint level.

When the council gets it wrong

19.1 Occasionally, the council or its staff will get something wrong and our good reputation depends on us being open and honest about such mistakes. In these circumstances, we will acknowledge our errors promptly, apologise as appropriate, and set out how we will put things right.

Leaked documents

20.1 Many officers of the council have access to internal documents which may be of interest to media organisations. If the unauthorised or inappropriate provision of information to the media is suspected, the council will not normally comment on the issue.

20.2 The matter will be reported to the relevant Chief Officer for further investigation. Leaking confidential information may lead to disciplinary action.

Events, photography and video

21.1 The council will, on occasion, hold events to publicise the council's work or celebrate achievement.

21.2 Invited attendees will be agreed in advance by event organisers in consultation with the Administration and in accordance with any established agreements protocols. Strategic Communications officers may offer advice to event organisers, but they will not normally issue invitations or otherwise manage the event, other than for media attendees.

21.3 Photographs and videos commissioned by the council for media publicity purposes will seek to achieve the best possible reach and impact and will be story-led and in line with the council's style guide and agreed standards.

21.4 Given the importance of Members' representative function within the council, commissioned photography and videos will seek to embed Members within the context of the image or footage wherever this is possible.

21.5 The relevant Cabinet Member and other members of the Administration as required will be invited to take part in any such commissioned photography, alongside any other representatives required to be present due to a partnership agreement or deemed relevant by the Administration as advised by the relevant Political Assistants.

Monitoring and evaluation

22.1 The Strategic Communications team will continually monitor media coverage of the council. Media coverage and analysis will form part of the key performance indicators set out in the Strategic Communications service delivery plan.

Complaints

23.1 Complaints regarding the council's communications activity and any potential infringement of the Media Protocol should be referred to the council's standard complaints process.

South Gloucestershire Council

Delivering for you

Code of Corporate Governance 2026

What is Corporate Governance?

1. The council has a key role in governing and leading our community. Effective local government relies on public confidence in elected councillors and officials. Effective corporate governance underpins the credibility and confidence in public services and ensures the highest standards are upheld in a measured and proportionate way, to ensure:
    a. Resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities
    b. There is sound and inclusive decision making
    c. There is clear accountability on the use of resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.
2. Governance is about how the council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Good governance leads to effective:
    a. Leadership and management
    b. Performance and risk management
    c. Stewardship of public money; and
    d. Public engagement and outcomes for those who work, live and visit our area.

What is the purpose of the Code of Corporate Governance?

3. The code is a public statement that sets out the way in which the council will meet their commitment to good governance.
4. The code supports councillors and officers with developing and maintaining robust governance arrangements including for partnerships and shared services.

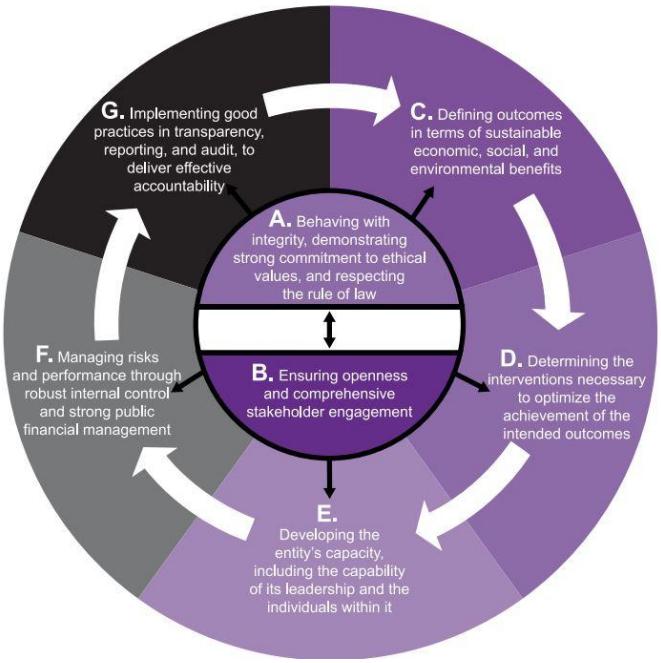
What is the Code based upon?

5. The Code is based upon seven core principles which derive from the framework presented in “Delivering Good Governance in the Public Sector” developed by CIPFA and SOLACE.

The Seven Core Principles:

- Behaving with integrity
- Ensuring Openness
- Defining Outcomes (economic, social, environmental)
- Determine effective interventions
- Developing capacity
- Managing risks and performance
- Transparency and effective accountability

Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/SOLACE 2016)



6. The Council's governance arrangements include internal management control, an effective performance management framework and risk management. Strong financial management in relation to the allocation of resources and service delivery are in place and the scrutiny commission has an essential part of the decision-making process.

7. The Best Value Duty relates to the statutory requirement for local authorities, defined as best value authorities, to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness." Best value authorities must demonstrate good governance including a positive organisational structure, across all their functions and effective risk management. The Council commits to adhering to the guiding principles of the best value duty around local accountability, continuous improvement and openness to challenge and support and will fulfil their responsibilities under the Best Value duty by taking account of the Seven best value themes, which are:

    a. Leadership
    b. Continuous improvement
    c. Use of resources
    d. Governance
    e. Culture
    f. Service Delivery
    g. Partnerships and Community Engagement

8. Members and Officers should work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Members determine the Council's policies and Officers are responsible for implementing decisions taken by the Council, and/or a Policy Committee, as well as taking decisions delegated to them under the Schemes of Delegation. Scrutiny of decisions takes place in Policy Committee and/or Sub-committees.

9. In discharging these duties all parties should act in an open, honest and transparent manner.

10. The Council is responsible for ensuring it has the right skills, experience and knowledge in its leadership structure to support the need to be efficient and effective in delivering its priorities. This includes the continuous development of its staff across the organisation and actively seeking the views and participation of individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds to reflect the communities the Council serves.

11. The Council seeks to ensure the highest standards are met and governance arrangements are not only sound but are evidenced transparently to be sound.

Applying the Core Principles

(A) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

Principles	Sub Principles	Applying the Principles
(A) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law	Behaving with Integrity	Councillors and Strategic Leadership Team will lead by example, a culture that encourages transparent decision making, demonstrates integrity and protects the values and reputation of the council. The Council values define what the council stands for and aspires to and have been communicated to all staff. The behaviours framework supports the values and demonstrates expectations placed on staff. Arrangements are in place to ensure that members and officers are not influenced in any way when dealing with decisions and stakeholders, these include declarations of interest and an anti-corruption policy.
	Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	The Council regularly monitors the effectiveness of the framework of governance to ensure it is operating effectively. Ensure ethical values underpin the work of the council and how it operates. Develop and maintain robust policies that support ethical values Ensure that external providers of services to the council can demonstrate they act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards.
	Respecting the Rule of Law	Councillors and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations. Create the conditions to ensure statutory officers, other key post holders and Councillors are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory provisions Optimise powers to the benefit of all stakeholders and deal with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively
Key Components For Behaving with Integrity will be evidenced by:		• Council values and behaviours framework • Annual Governance Statement and Constitution including financial regulations and contract rules. • Making and recording any declarations of interests at meetings • Development and maintenance of both an employee and member code of conduct which sets out the expectations of the organisation • Development and maintenance of a standards sub-committee • Maintenance of registers of interests, gifts and hospitality for both staff and members. • Regular update and review of a robust Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy and an Anti-money laundering policy and procedures • Effective whistleblowing policy procedures being in place • A members planning code of good practice

(B) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Principles	Sub Principles	Applying the Principles
(B) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.	Openness	The Council ensures an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communication of the council's commitment to openness. Making decisions that are open and providing adequate justification for keeping any decisions confidential. Providing clear evidence and reasoning for decisions with robust risk assessments, to ensure the impact and consequences of decisions are fully understood. Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate interventions and actions.
	Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resource to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively Ensuring that partnerships (both formal and informal) are based on trust, a shared commitment to achieving improved outcomes and a culture that promotes and accepts challenge to add value.
	Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users.	The council is committed to increasing public involvement in decision making and establishing a clear approach for receiving input from local organisations. The council will seek and respond to the views of stakeholders and the community. Establishing and communicating the council's policy on what types of issues the organisation will meaningfully consult on and the key stakeholders for any consultation. Regular review of communication methods used to ensure they continue to be the most effective and to ensure that members and officers are clear about their role with regard to community engagement. Implementing and balancing effective feedback mechanisms to take into account the needs of current and future generations of stakeholders.
Key Components For Openness and stakeholder engagement will be evidenced by:		• Publishing a forward schedule of key decisions and report publishing dates that are strictly adhered to, published annual statement of accounts and Annual Governance Statement. • A strategic partnership framework • Having a policy on consultation and providing access to a range of consultation methods, a medial protocol. Using a variety of methods to provide residents of South Gloucestershire the opportunity to give their views on council services and performance • Maintain and review an effective complaints procedure and arrangements for lawful and efficient handling of subject access requests and freedom of information enquiries. • Member/officer protocol for communications.

(C) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

Principles	Sub Principles	Applying the Principles
(C) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.	Defining Outcomes	We are committed to an ambitious strategy and vision for achieving the best for our residents and their communities. We demonstrate this by publishing: · Our Council Plan · An Annual Performance Report · Our Improvement Programme We will regularly review the council's vision for the local community and its implications for the council's governance arrangements. The council will define outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available, managing stakeholders' expectations when determining priorities. The council will identify and manage risks to the achievement of outcomes
	Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.	The council considers and balances the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions by: • Defining impacts within decision reports to be provided to members • Maintaining risk registers which will assess risks and provide mitigations associated with economic social and environmental impacts • Undertaking consultations with residents where appropriate. The council, where necessary, will take a long-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently. Determination of the wider public interest associated with economic, social and environmental benefits through consultation, where possible, and be clear about any compromises or deviations from policy. Ensuring fair access to services, taking into account the needs of all stakeholders, including the most vulnerable.
Key Components For Openness and stakeholder engagement will be evidenced by:		• The Council plan • Treasury Management Strategy and capital investment strategy • Climate emergency action plans and targets. • Medium Term financial planning and annual budget setting consultation and process. • Robust process for business cases and management of programmes and projects. • Service Plans • Ensuring the council has robust procedures for equalities including the use of equality impact assessments in decision making

(D) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Principles	Sub Principles	Applying the Principles
(D) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.	Determining interventions	The Council will aim to deliver high quality services that make the best use of resources and are value for money. The council has robust decision-making mechanisms in place to ensure outcomes are optimised. The Council will do this by: • Delivering services to meet the needs of the local community and put in place processes to ensure that they operate effectively in practice. • Determining local needs and targeting resources accordingly as per the Council Strategy. • Developing effective relationships and partnerships with other public sector agencies and the private and voluntary sectors • Responding positively to the findings and recommendations of external auditors and statutory inspectors and putting in place arrangements for the implementation of agreed actions. • Developing approaches to benchmark our services and test value for money. • Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements. • Engaging with all key stakeholders as appropriate • Considering and monitoring risks associated with decisions.
	Planning interventions	The council establishes planning cycles to ensure regular review of strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets. Engaging with internal and external stakeholders to plan how services might be delivered and appropriate courses of action to be taken. Monitoring risks affecting partners when working collaboratively. Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile to adapt to changing circumstances
	Optimising achievement of intended outcomes.	The council will ensure the medium-term financial plan integrates and balances service priorities and other resource constraints. The budgeting process is inclusive, considering the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term. The robustness of arrangements has been measured against the CIPFA financial management code. Working towards the achievement of social value through service planning and commissioning, ensuring, where possible, additional benefit can be leveraged over and above the direct purchasing of goods and services.
Key Components For Optimising achievement of intended outcomes will be evidenced by		• Risk and Opportunity Strategy and Organisation and Departmental Risk Registers. • Quarterly performance monitoring and annual performance reports • Management assurance statements and engagement with heads of services and Senior Managers Network • Monthly budget monitoring process

(E) Developing the Councils capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

Principles	Sub Principles	Applying the Principles
(E) Developing the Councils capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.	Developing the Councils capacity	The Council will ensure that those charged with the governance and leadership of the council have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well. The council will do this by: • Implementing a Member Development Strategy • Developing leadership skills and capacity across the Council • Developing our approach to workforce planning • Maintaining and developing our Personal Development and Performance review systems • Cascading regular information to Members and staff
	Developing the capability of the Council' s leadership and other individuals	The Council will develop protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. The Council will also: • Publish a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body; • Ensure the Leader and the Chief Executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the Chief Executive leads the Council in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by Members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority; • Develop the capabilities of Members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by: ¬ ensuring Members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged; ¬ ensuring Members and Officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis; and ¬ ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external. • Ensure that there are structures in place to encourage public participation. • Take steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensure leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections; • Hold staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs; and • Ensure arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.

Key Components for developing the capacity of its leadership will be evidenced by:	• Member Development Strategy and Induction • Personal development and Performance Review process • Wellbeing co-ordinator and Strategy • Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health Services • Workforce and Development Strategies

(F) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

Principles	Sub Principles	Applying the Principles
(F) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.	Managing Risk	The Council recognises that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making. The Council will: • Implement robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensure that they are working effectively; and • Ensure that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.
	Managing Performance	The Council monitors service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review. The Council will: • Make decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the Council's financial, social and environmental position and outlook. • Ensure an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the Council's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible. • Provide Members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement; and • Ensure there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements).
	Robust internal control	The council will ensure there is a robust framework of internal controls, it will: • Align the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives. • Evaluate and monitor the Council's risk management and internal control arrangements on a regular basis. • Ensure effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place. • Ensure additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor. • Ensure an Audit and Accounts Committee which is independent of the executive and accountable to the Council: ¬ provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment; and ¬ that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon.
	Managing Data	The council will ensure there are effective arrangements in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data. It will: • Ensure effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies; and • Review and audit regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.

	Strong public financial management	The Council will ensure financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance; and will ensure well –developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.
Key Components For managing risk		• Risk Management Framework and Strategy • Data Security and information governance policies • Annual Assurance report including Head of Internal Audit Opinion • Financial Regulations

(G) Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Principles	Sub Principles	Applying the Principles
(G) Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.	Implementing good practice in transparency	The Council will write and communicate reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate. The Council will strike a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand.
	Implementing good practices in reporting	The Council will report at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way. It will: • Ensure Members and senior management own the results; • Ensure robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publish the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (Annual Governance Statement); • Ensure that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate; and • Ensure the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisation
	Assurance and effective accountability	The Council will ensure that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon. It will • Ensure an effective internal audit service with direct access to Members is in place which provides assurance regarding governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon. • Welcome peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implement recommendations. • Gain assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and evidence this in the annual governance statement; and • Ensure that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.

Key Components For implementing good practice in delivering transparency and accountability.	• Performance reports and reports to the Audit and Accounts Committee, especially related to the Annual Governance Statement and the performance of internal audit. • Complaints and Compliments annual report. • The council constitution

Monitoring and Review

12. Good Corporate Governance requires the active participation of Councillors and employees across the authority. To ensure that our Code is effectively put into practice we will implement the following monitoring and review procedures.

13. An officer led group, comprised of key senior officers from each of the Departments of the council will meet to oversee and review the governance operations of the council. This group is known as the Corporate Governance Working Group. The group has specific responsibilities as follows:
    a. Development, implementation and continuous improvement of the Council's corporate governance culture and supporting process framework.
    b. Preparation, adoption and maintenance of an up-to-date local code of corporate governance, including arrangements for ensuring its implementation and ongoing application.
    c. Development, implementation and continuous improvement of the Council's risk management arrangements.
    d. Co-ordination and review of the Council's Annual Governance Statement.
    e. Promotion and celebration of best practice in corporate governance throughout the Council.
14. Each year the Council will publish an Annual Governance Statement. This will provide an overall assessment of the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements and an appraisal of the key controls in place to manage the Council's principal governance risks. The Statement will also provide details of where improvements need to be made.

15. The Annual Governance Statement will be approved by the Audit and Accounts Committee, for signing by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

16. The Statement will be published with the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts and will be audited by our External Auditors.

17. This code of corporate governance will be reviewed in full, every two years.

Code of Conduct for Employees

South Gloucestershire Council

Code of Conduct for Employees

South Gloucestershire Council's Code of Conduct sets out the professional standards required of all employees.

The Code forms part of every employee's terms and conditions of employment and is reviewed annually by the Head of Human Resources.

Date created: June 2014

Contents

Code of Conduct

1. Standards

2. Equality

3. Political Neutrality

4. Disclosure of Information

5. Relationships with Councillors
6. Commitments Outside of Work and Conflicts of Interest
7. Personal and Financial Interests
8. Use of Financial Resources
9. Contractors and Contractors

10. Appointments, Employment and IT Matters
11. Professional Misconduct
12. Court/Tribunal Proceedings
13. Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship
14. Inventions, Patents and Intellectual Property Rights
15. Bribery and Corruption
16. Public Relations and Talking to the Media
17. Responsibilities

Appendix 1 – Declaration Form

Code of Conduct

South Gloucestershire Council's Code of Conduct for Employees sets out the obligations and professional standards of conduct required of all employees.

The Code complies with employment legislation, the Council's Constitution and the Local Government Act 1972.

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees. In performing their duties, employees must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

Activities carried out by employees acting as members of companies, voluntary organisations or other bodies are required to adhere to this code when acting in this capacity.

1. Standards

Employees are required to:

1.1 provide the highest possible standard of service and provide appropriate, impartial advice.

1.2 to serve the whole of South Gloucestershire Council.

1.3 act in accordance with the obligations set out in this code, recognising the duty of all public sector employees to carry out public functions reasonably, efficiently and according to the law.

1.4 be courteous, efficient and impartial at all times when carrying out your work.

1.5 report any misconduct or poor standards including safeguarding issues using the appropriate council procedure as necessary e.g. whistleblowing procedure.

1.6 any breach of this code, your statutory responsibilities, professional conduct, policies or procedures, may be treated as a conduct issue which could result in action or in more serious cases, dismissal for Gross Misconduct. Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the Managing Employee Procedure.

2. Equality

2.1 Every employee must comply with relevant legislation, namely the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 2004 and Freedom of Information Act 2000. All individuals and organisations have

a right to be treated with fairness and equity and for their personal information to be managed appropriately at all times.

3. Political Neutrality

3.1 Employees serve the whole of the council. We work with all councillors from all political groups and may be required to advise them in ways which do not compromise political neutrality.

3.2 Employees must not:-

- use their position for political gain either as an individual or for any political group.
- allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

3.3 If you hold a politically restricted post, you must ensure you comply with the responsibilities/duties and statutory restrictions applicable to your post.

3.4 All employees must follow the council's policies and procedures.

3.5 Political Assistants appointed on a limited term contract in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are exempt from the standards set in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.2. See Politically Restricted Posts.

4. Disclosure of Information

4.1 The council encourages a culture of openness and transparency. The law requires that certain information must be made available to councillors, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate to be made public. You should make yourself aware of what information the council is open about and what it is not open about and follow the appropriate procedures when disclosing information.

4.2 All employees have a duty of confidentiality to the council and must act as required in accordance with 4.1 above to maintain confidentiality.

4.3 You must not use any information obtained in the course of your employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should you pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

4.4 All employees are under a duty to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI). See Information Governance.

4.5 All employees are required to undertake compulsory Data Protection training as required by the Director of Resources and Business Change as the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).

4.6 Employees should consult their manager or Departmental Complaints Representative (DCR) or Legal Services if there is any uncertainty regarding any type of information for which disclosure is sought.

5. Relationships with Councillors

5.1 Mutual respect between employees and councillors is essential to good local government. Any personal relationship between employees and a councillor should be conducted in a professional manner at all times.

5.2 All relationships with councillors must be made known to your line manager e.g. where a relative or close personal friend becomes a councillor.

5.3 The declaration must be made using the form and submitted to:

- Children, Adults & Health – Head of Business Support, Martin Dear
- Environment & Community Services – Head of Operational Support, Janet Faire
- Corporate Resources – Head of Legal, Governance & Democratic Services, John McCormack.

6. Commitments Outside of Work and Conflicts of Interest

6.1 Some employees have conditions of service which require them to obtain the written consent of the council to take any additional employment outside of the council. All employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take any additional employment, or take up any position in an organisation, which conflicts with the council's interests or their role in the council.

6.2 It is the employee's responsibility to raise any potential conflicts with their manager when undertaking work outside of their normal position (voluntary or paid).

6.3 Employees are not permitted to use any council material or information for personal gain when undertaking work (either paid or voluntary) outside of their job.

7. Personal and Financial Interests

7.1 Councillors are subject to a local Code of Conduct which requires them to declare personal, financial and non-financial interests and to refrain from

participating in any decisions which relate to those interests. Like councillors, all employees are required to undertake all of their responsibilities impartially and free from influence.

7.2 Employees must notify their manager and declare any financial or non-financial interests they consider could conflict with the council's interests. You can do so by completing the form.

7.3 Where an employee's duties require them to deal with matters concerning outside organisations, bodies or individuals and where an employee is personally and/or directly or indirectly involved, e.g. they have a close personal relationship with an individual involved in one of these organisations or bodies, the employee must notify their manager of the relationship.

7.4 You must complete the form providing information about the nature of the relationship and provide this to your line manager who will determine in writing whether as a result of the relationship you can continue to undertake the specific work and/or place restrictions on your role.

7.5 Failure to disclose a relevant personal or financial interest or a failure to comply with the manager's decision following disclosure could jeopardise decisions made and could result in disciplinary action.

7.6 Any employee appointed or nominated by the council to serve on an external body is required to complete the form detailing the nature and capacity of their appointment, and should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer to ensure no conflicts of interest arise.

8. Use of Financial Resources

8.1 Employees must ensure that all public funds are used in a responsible and lawful manner and in accordance with the council's financial standing orders. They should strive to ensure value for money and avoid any legal challenge to the council.

8.2 Any financial irregularities must be reported to the relevant Chief Officer, who must also notify the Director of Resources and Business Change.

9. Contracts and Contractors

9.1 Relationships and awards of contracts.

- Orders and contracts must be awarded strictly in accordance with the requirements of the council's financial standing orders and procurement process. Orders and contracts must always be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders and no preferential treatment should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or

relatives in the tender process or towards organisations/bodies with whom the employee is involved.

- An employee must make all appropriate declarations in accordance with Section 7 above: Personal and financial interests.

9.2 Contractors and separation of roles during tendering.

- Employees involved in a tender process must ensure there is a separation of client and contractor roles within the council and no conflict of interests. Senior employees who have both client and contractor responsibility must ensure there is accountability and openness.

- Employees who are aware of confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors must not disclose that information to any party or organisation.

- Employees must ensure that no favour is shown to current or recent former employees, partners, close relatives or associates when awarding contracts.

10. Appointments, Employment and IT Matters

10.1 Employees involved in the recruitment selection process must ensure appointments are made on the basis of merit.

10.2 Employees should not be involved in the recruitment process, decisions related to disciplinary procedures, promotion or pay adjustments where they are related to an applicant/employee, or have a close personal relationship with them.

10.3 Employee's must notify their line manager of any statutory illegality, that may affect their ability to carry out the duties of their post e.g. drivers who lose their driving license.

10.4 All employees must ensure that they comply with the IT security and use policy and Social Media policy including:-

- security requirements regarding mobile IT devices, e.g. laptops, mobile and landline phones, tablets, internet, etc.
- not disclosing passwords.
- not compromising the council's IT service with regard to phishing emails. accessing illegal and inappropriate websites. IT Security Policy.

11. Professional Misconduct

11.1 Employees who are required as part of their employment to be members of a professional body must comply with the code of conduct and regulations of the applicable governing body.

11.2 Any breach of a professional code of conduct, may result in a referral to their professional body.

12. Court/Tribunal Proceedings

12.1 All employees must adhere to the council's time off work policy with regard to attending court/tribunal proceedings that are unconnected to their role.

12.2 If an employee issues proceedings against the council in any capacity, the following applies:

- any preparation must be done within the employees own time.
- council property/equipment must not be used to prepare an employee's case.
- any time off to attend any proceedings/hearing must be taken within the employees own time, using annual or flexi leave. If unpaid leave is required this must be approved by your Head of Service.

13. Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship

13.1 Employees should only accept hospitality where there is a genuine need or in situations where the council should be represented. All gifts and hospitality must be authorised and recorded.

13.2 When receiving authorised hospitality employees should be sensitive to its timing in relation to any decisions the council may be taking which could affect those providing the hospitality.

13.3 Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable, where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the council gives consent in advance and where the council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment etc, are required, employees should ensure the council meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent decisions.

13.4 Employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors, suppliers or other organisations. Small tokens e.g. pens and diaries can be retained.

13.5 Hospitality and/or gifts of any value offered, received or declined must be declared and recorded promptly by the recipient in the Departmental Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

13.6 If an external organisation is seeking to sponsor a council activity, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply.

14. Inventions, Patents and Intellectual Rights

14.1 The intellectual rights and creation of an idea will become the property of the council provided that:

- it has been made in the course of the employee's normal duties; or
- where invention might be reasonably expected within the employee's specified duties; or
- where a special obligation to further the interests of the council was in the course of the employees duties.

14.2 Normal duties are those described or inferred in the role profile or job descriptions, as well as any notified temporary changes to duties.

15. Bribery and Corruption

15.1 Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them to corruptly receive or gift any gift, loan, fee, reward, or advantage for doing or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person or body in their official capacity.

16. Public relations and talking to the media

16.1 The council's strategic communications team coordinate and manage all media relations including co-ordinating interviews, producing news releases, statements and lines to take.

16.2 If you are directly approached by a member of the media you must not attempt to answer questions yourself; instead you should immediately refer the journalist to the strategic communications team who will manage the response. More information can be found in the council's media protocol.

Responsibilities

Manager	Ensure that they are familiar with and comply with the Code of Conduct and ensure employees comply with the Code of Conduct and deal with any non-compliance promptly and effectively
Employee	Comply with the Code of Conduct and report any non- compliance to their manager promptly
HR	Provide support and advice to managers as required. Review the Code of Conduct annually
Legal	Provide support and advice to managers as required
The Monitoring Officer	To undertake statutory duties in relation to unlawful acts or omission in accordance with section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

Appendix 1

Code of Conduct for Employees

I wish to declare the following information/activities in accordance with the requirements contained in the council's Code of Conduct for Employees.

Name:	
Job Title:	
Department:	
Division:	Line Manager :
Signature:	Date:

Provide full details of your declaration(s) below. Please refer to the Code of Conduct for Employees for guidance.	
Nature of Declaration	**Details**
Relationship with Councillors	
Outside Commitments/ Conflict of Interest	
Register of Financial and Non Financial Interests	
Register of Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship.(should include offered but declined).	

On completion of this form, a copy should be retained by the Service Department and a copy must be submitted the Monitoring Officer by email to: legalsupport@southglos.gov.uk	
People	Service Director
Places	Service Director
Resources and Business Change	Service Director for Legal, Governance & Democratic Services

Managers comments/ instructions to employee

Approval of Director/ Head of Service

Signature: **Print name:**

Date:

Guidance for managers

1. The declaration should be acknowledged by management in writing.

2. Where guidance has been issued to the employee, it should be confirmed in writing within 14 days of the declaration being made.

3. A copy of the approved declaration form and any associated guidance should be retained in departmental records; which should be held for each category of declaration.

Guidance for employees

1. Declarations should be made when they arise.

2. A copy of the approved declaration form should be retained by the employee for record purposes, in the event of a challenge at a later date.

3. You should not be involved in any negotiations or place contracts with third parties with whom you have declared an interest unless specifically instructed by your manager in writing.

Councillor Role Descriptions

COUNCILLOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

Ward Councillor

1. To represent the interests and concerns of residents in their Ward:-

    - To the Council, Committees or Officers

        - On matters under Council or Committee consideration
        - On matters that require attention
        - On matters on which the Member has been consulted.

    - To other agencies and organisations.

2. To participate in full Council meetings:

    - Raise Ward issues (e.g. Via petitions, questions and motions)
    - Corporate decision-making on the Council's budget, levels of Council Tax and strategic policy framework
    - Consideration of reports of Committees

3. To participate in the work of Committees of the Council which

    - Make decisions
    - Deal with ethical standards, appointments, appeals or complaints and scrutiny

4. To participate as Ward Members in the work of Community Engagement Forums

    - Keep in touch with issues and concerns
    - Be the leader of their areas
    - Be a focus for public participation and act as an advisory / consultative role
    - Develop partnership working/liaison with other organisations on local issues
    - Provide local Member input to existing and future locality-based partnership arrangements
    - Provide feedback on service provision locally
    - Delegated local decision-making within Council policy and any other constraints

5. To participate in the work of topic forums, partnerships and outside bodies

    - Liaison / partnership working
    - Feedback

6. To participate in the work of outside bodies and school governing bodies as appointed by the Council or by a Committee of the Council.

7. To comply with the Code of Conduct.

Scrutiny Commission Member

(Including Members on informal working groups IWG)

The Scrutiny Commission and IWG Members will:

- agree issues to be considered by the Scrutiny Commission as part of a strategic work plan
- make recommendations to the Executive
- call in decisions
- monitor in year performance and budgets, and
- conduct in-depth reviews of particular issues of relevance through the establishment of informal and focused task and finish groups. Groups will be comprised of Scrutiny Commission and other members. Task and finish groups will carry out in-depth, focused, and potentially cross cutting pieces of work, which may take 3/6 months. It is anticipated that there may be 5/6 such reviews spread across the year

Chair of the Scrutiny Commission

1. To chair meetings

2. To lead and guide the work of the Commission in co-operation with the members of the Committee

3. To ensure that the work of the Commission is at all times conducted in a constructive and positive manner and in the best interests of the Council

4. To assist the Commission in the development and review of its work programme in conjunction with officers and group spokespersons

5. To prepare reports of the Commission in conjunction with officers and members of the committee.

6. To present reports on behalf of the Commission to the Executive or the Council

NB: The Chair shall not be a member of the Executive or the Chair of the Council

COUNCILLOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

Chair of Non-Executive Committee

1. To chair and facilitate meetings

2. To lead and guide the work of the Committee

3. To ensure that the work of the Committee is at all times conducted in a constructive and positive manner and in the best interests of the Council

Lead Member For A Non-Executive Committee

1. To lead and co-ordinate members of the political group in relation to the work of the Committee

2. To be the principal spokesperson for their group

3. Provide effective communication between the Chair of Committee and the political group

4. Be the lead contact for their group with the relevant Chief Officer for issues under the Committee area

Political Group Leader

A political group leader will be appointed by each political group from within their group's membership.

Terms of Reference

1. To provide leadership and speak on behalf of the political group

2. To co-ordinate the role of the political group within the Council

3. To exercise task-related management, supervision and personal development review of the political assistant allocated by the Council to support the work of the group

Contacts and Relationships

- Other Political Group Leaders
- Committee Chairs and Lead Members
- Other Members of the Council
- The Chief Executive and Directors

COUNCILLOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

- Partners and external bodies
- Politicians outside of the Council
- Voluntary and community organisations.

Chair and Vice Chair of Council

1. Appointment

Annually, the Council will elect the Chair and Vice Chair of Council

2. Terms of Reference

The Chair of Council and in their absence, the Vice Chair, will have the following roles and functions:

a) Ceremonial Role

The Chair of Council:

- is the civic leader of South Gloucestershire Council
- promotes the interests and reputation of the Council and South Gloucestershire as a whole, and acts as an ambassador for both; and
- undertakes civic, community and ceremonial activities and fosters community identity and pride. Attends civic / ceremonial functions

b) Responsibilities of the Chair

- to uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution, and to interpret the Constitution when necessary;
- to preside over meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out fairly and efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community;
- to ensure that the Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community;
- to promote public involvement in the Council's activities

c) Vice Chair

- The Vice Chair will give support to the Chair and carry out duties in their absence.

The Chair and Vice Chair of Council will be expected to have regard to guidance issued in relation to the fulfilment of their roles.

COUNCILLOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

Executive Member – Generic Duties

1. To have collective responsibility for the development and execution of council policy, the discharge of executive functions and associated decision making.

2. To have responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of services under the Portfolio and to discharge the functions contained in the terms of reference for the Portfolio.

3. To have responsibility for policy development under the Portfolio.

4. To ensure that the work related to the Portfolio is at all times conducted in a constructive and positive manner and in the best interests of the Council.

5. To prepare reports of the Portfolio in conjunction with officers and present reports as required.

6. To act as principal spokesperson for the Portfolio, give quotes and make statements when required within the Portfolio either pro-actively or responsively. To be the lead contact for the Portfolio with the relevant Chief Officer for issues under their area and to liaise with relevant stakeholders.

7. To engage with the Scrutiny Commission as required.

INDIVIDUAL PORTFOLIO EXECUTIVE MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES IN ADDITION TO DISCHARGING PORTFOLIO TERMS OF REFERENCE AND THE GENERIC DUTIES ABOVE

Specific Responsibilities - for the Executive Member for Children and Young People

Section 19 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to designate one of its members as Lead Member for Children's Services.

The Chair of Children, Adults and Health Committee will fulfil this role and will have the following responsibilities:

- To have political responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority Children's Services as defined in Section 18 (2) of the Children Act 2004. This includes (but is not limited to) responsibility for children and young people receiving education or children's social care services in South Gloucestershire, all children looked after by the local authority and all young people from South Gloucestershire in custody (regardless of where the latter two groups are placed).

- Together with the Director of Children's Services to work closely with other local partners to improve outcomes for and wellbeing of all children and young people.

- To be a participating observer of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

- To ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people and their families and carers are addressed.

- To provide strong strategic leadership, support and challenge to the Director of Children's Services and relevant senior officers, whilst allowing the Director to exercise day to day operational management of education and other children's services.

- To be accountable to the Leader of the Council for ensuring that the effectiveness of steps taken and capacity to improve outcomes for all children and young people, including their safeguarding, is reflected across the full range of the Council's business.

- To have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNRC) and ensure that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services.

Contacts and Relationships

To improve the outcomes for wellbeing of children and young people, the Executive Member will work closely with

- The Director of Children's Services;
- The Director of Public Health;
- The Leader of Council;
- The Chief Executive;
- Other Members of the Council;
- Head Teachers and School Governors of Local Authority Maintained Schools;
- Academy sponsors, trusts, governing bodies and Head Teachers;
- Local statutory partners such as health, police, probation;
- Voluntary and community organisations;
- Children and young people

Specific Responsibilities -for the Executive Member for Adults and Homes

The Executive Member will:

Be responsible for delivery of the Council's statutory Public Health duties including:-

- The duty to improve the health of the population of South Gloucestershire and to reduce health inequalities
- The duty to ensure adequate plans are in place for dealing with health protection and other emergencies
- The duty to provide public health advice to local NHS commissioners
- Attending relevant West of England meetings on housing matters

Specific Responsibilities - for the Executive Member for Communities and Place

The Executive Member will be responsible for ensuring that the Committee discharges its statutory functions in relation to Community Safety.

Specific Responsibilities - for the Executive Member for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure

- Attending relevant West of England meetings on housing matters

Specific Responsibilities for the Executive Members

The relevant Executive Members will be appointed to the West of England Combined Authority Advisory Boards.

COUNCILLOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

LEADER

1. Act as the principal spokesperson and advocate for the Council and at all times promote the reputation and interests of South Gloucestershire locally and nationally.

2. Represent the Council politically at national, sub-regional and local levels on outside bodies or in partnership with other agencies.

3. Act as the lead Member for Emergency Planning, working with the Chief Executive.

4. Hold the Executive Member for Children's Services to account.

5. To be the Authority's appointed member on the West of England Combined Authority

The Leader will work closely with:

- The Executive Members and other Members of the Council when required
- The Chief Executive and Directors
- The West of England Combined Authority
- Partners and external bodies
- Politicians outside of the Council
- Voluntary and community organisation

CO-LEADER or DEPUTY LEADER

To assist the Council Leader with budget development and policy coordination

To deputise for the Leader of Council when required

The Co-Leader or Deputy Leader role will be discharged by one of the Cabinet Portfolio holders



Members' Allowances and Leave Scheme

All Members are entitled to a basic allowance. Those with additional roles may also receive a special responsibility allowance (SRA) which reflects the level of responsibility and expected time commitment. Allowances are set by the council on the recommendation of an independent remuneration panel. Details of the basic allowance and SRA's are set out in Appendix 1

The council also allows Members to claim allowances for travel and subsistence, these are set out in Appendix 2.

In addition, the council wishes to make provision to support elected members balance family life with their council duties. The allowances and guidance are set out in Appendix 3.

Allowances are subject to income tax and it is each Member's responsibility to ensure payment. If you are in receipt of benefits it is your responsibility to declare allowances to the Department of Work & Pensions.

1. Basic Allowance

A Basic Allowance shall be paid to each Councillor. Appendix 1 includes the current rate. Allowance will be paid monthly. The Basic Allowance is equivalent to 14/37 of SCP28 on the Local Government NJC PayScale's.

2. Number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

The overall number of SRAs is limited to not more than half (i.e. 30) of the 61 councillors serving the authority.

3. Receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances

Only one Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) can be paid to any individual councillor. Where a councillor is given more than one position of special responsibility, he/she will receive only the SRA of greater value.

The amount of each such SRA shall be the amount specified against that special responsibility in Appendix 1. SRA's will be paid monthly.

4. Co-optee's Allowance

- £444 per year, or pro-rata if a co-opted member serves for a shorter time.
- Co-optee's allowances are not to be paid to any person employed by the Council.
- The Scheme for Members' Travel and subsistence allowances is to apply to co-opted members.

- The Dependant care allowance is to apply to co-opted members.

5. Transparency and Accountability

The Council will publish annually as a condition of members receiving allowances a report of Councillors receiving Special Responsibility allowances.

6. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

Councillors and co-opted members are entitled to claim reimbursement for travel and subsistence costs incurred in approved duties in accordance with the same arrangements as apply to employees.

The Scheme for Members' Travel and Subsistence Allowance is set out in Appendix 2.

The circumstances in which travel and subsistence allowances can be paid. Details of the "approved duties" are set out in Appendix 4 to this Scheme.

7. Dependant Carers Allowance

Members may claim carers allowance to support the care of dependants whilst they carry out approved duties.

Dependants are:

- Spouse/partner.
- Child (including adopted or foster child).
- Parent.
- Someone who lives with the member as a member of the family (excluding lodgers, friends, flatmates etc).
- Someone who reasonably relies on the member for care

Carers should be aged 18 or over and the allowance is not payable in respect of care provided by an immediate family or other household member.

Carer allowances are paid to councillors at a rate equivalent to the National Living Wage, or the actual cost of the care if a session needs to be booked with a provider, for example a day care nursery, (whichever is the greater) subject to the production of receipts for expenditure actually incurred. Hours may be calculated from the time of leaving home to the time of returning home from an approved duty.

The circumstances in which a dependant's care allowance can be paid (the "approved duties") are set out in the Appendix 4 to this Scheme.

8. Updating of Allowances

The Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (expressed as factors of Basic) are to be updated by the value of any local government pay award in relation to scp 28 on the NJC pay spine.

Travel and subsistence allowances are to be updated in line with updates to the employee scheme and the Inland Revenue Authorised Mileage Allowance Payment Scheme (AMAPS) which determines mileage rates.

That dependant carer's allowance is to be updated in line with updates to the National Living Wage

9. Pensions for Councillors

None of the allowances contained within this scheme shall be eligible for inclusion with the Local Government Pension Scheme.

10. Withholding or Reclaiming Allowances where a Councillor is Suspended or Partially Suspended

Where a councillor is suspended or partially suspended from his/her responsibilities or duties as a councillor of the authority, the part of basic and special responsibility allowance payable for the period of suspension or partial suspension will be withheld or reclaimed by the authority.

11. Attendance at meetings

This Scheme is subject to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972. By virtue of s85 of the Act, and the Scheme shall be administered in accordance with the provisions of the Act. A summary of the provisions is set out below:

1. any member who fails to attend any meeting of the Authority for a continuous period of 6 months, will on the expiry of the six months, automatically cease to be a member of the Authority, unless the authority has, before the six months expires approved an extended period of absence in respect of that member.

2. If an executive member fails to attend any meeting for a period of six months, but during that period they discharge functions for which they have responsibility as an executive member, the discharge of their executive functions shall be deemed to be attendance at a meeting of the executive.

3. In respect of the leader, attendance at a committee of the executive will constitute attendance at a meeting of the executive.

In the event the authority approves an extended period of absence beyond the six-month period, the member will be entitled to continue to receive their Basic Allowance.

If the member is in receipt of an SRA, they shall continue to receive the SRA unless or until the member ceases to hold a position for which an SRA is paid.

During a period of absence (including any approved extended period of absence) members shall only be permitted to claim allowances referred to in Appendix 2 of this Scheme if they can demonstrate that the costs were incurred in connection with the discharge of their duties as a councillor.

In the event the authority declines to approve an extended period of absence, on the expiration of the six-month period the member immediately ceases to be a member of the authority and the payment ceases immediately.

13. Election to Forgo Allowances

As provided by the regulations, a person may, by notice in writing to the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services, elect to forgo his/her entitlement or any part of his/her entitlement to allowances under this Scheme.

14. Membership of Another Authority

As required by regulations, where a councillor is also a member of another authority, that councillor may not receive allowances from more than one authority in respect of the same duties.

Appendix 1

Basic allowance is £15,303 - SRAs for 2025/26 *(Inc 26/27 Pay Ward)*

The Basic Allowance is equivalent to 14/37 of SCP28 on the Local Government NJC pay scales.

Role	Factor of Basic Allowance	SRA Allowance
Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Council Governance	190%	£29,075
Cabinet member for Children and Young People	120%	£18,363
Cabinet member for Adults and Homes	100%	£15,303
Cabinet member for Education, Skills Employment and	100%	£15,303
Cabinet member for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure	100%	£15,303
Cabinet member for Communities and Local Place	100%	£15,303
Cabinet member for Cost of Living, Equalities and Public Health	100%	£15,303
Cabinet member for Corporate Resources	100%	£15,303
Cabinet member for Climate and Nature Emergency	100%	£15,303

Chair of Health Scrutiny	70%	£10,712
Chair of Scrutiny Commission	70%	£10,712
Chair of Regulatory Committee	70%	£10,712
Chair of Development Management Committee	70%	£10,712
Chair of Strategic Sites Committee	70%	£10,712
Chair of Audit and Accounts	30%	£4,590
Chair of Council	50%	£7,651
Vice Chair of Council	15%	£2,295
Conservative Group Leader	70%	£10,712
Labour Group Leader	70%	£10,712
Lib Dem Group Leader	70%	£10,712
Minority Group Lead Member(s) on Health Scrutiny	40%	£6,121
Minority Group Lead Member(s) on Regulatory Committee	40%	£6,121
Minority Group Lead Member(s) on Development Management Committee	40%	£6,121
Minority Group Lead Member(s) Strategic Sites Committee	40%	£6,121

Note: Councillors are only able to have one SRA. If a Member has two roles only the highest SRA will be allocated.

Appendix 2

SCHEME FOR MEMBERS' TRAVEL AND SUBSISTANCE

Introduction

Members are entitled to claim reimbursement for travel and subsistence costs incurred in approved duties in accordance with the same arrangements as apply to employees.

These are set out below and will be updated from time to time following any changes to the employees' scheme.

	Car Allowance	Where a Member uses a private car on official business (i.e. on 'approved duties'), the member will receive an allowance in accordance with the Inland Revenue Authorised Mileage Allowance Payment Scheme (AMAPS).
	Mileage Rates	The Inland Revenue AMAPS rate is currently 45p per mile for all vehicles.
	Car Parking	Members will be reimbursed for any car parking charges whilst undertaking 'approved duties', subject to production of receipts.
	Fines and Penalties	The Council will not be liable for any parking fines or road traffic penalties. Incurred by Members, regardless of the circumstances.
	Calculating Mileage	Mileage is calculated from the home base of the Member.
	Car Insurance	Members who use their own vehicle or a vehicle registered or insured in someone else's name, on 'approved duties' must ensure that the insurance covering that vehicle is adequate. The cover must be sufficient to permit the Member to drive the vehicle for business purposes. Members should contact the Motor Insurers for any advice.
	Passenger Allowance	(a) The allowance of 5p per mile will be paid to the driver, in respect of one or more passengers who are fellow members or Council employees carried on Council business. This will mean that, in accordance with the Inland Revenue Scheme, Tax and National Insurance deductions would not be made on these payments.

		(b) Claims for Passenger Allowance should be made through the on-line claim 'My View'. (c) Drivers who are to claim the passenger allowance must satisfy themselves that their Motor Insurers will not consider the receipt of the additional allowance paid for the carrying of a passenger as being the hire or reward within the terms of their Policy. (d) Passenger mileage allowance is restricted to the drivers paid business mileage on the day of the claim.
	Motorcycle Allowance	The Council has adopted the Inland Revenue Authorised Mileage Payment Scheme (AMAPS) for employees who use a motorcycle for official journeys. The current rate is 24 pence per mile.
	Cycle Allowance	A cycle allowance will be payable for use of cycles for appropriate short journeys related to 'approved duties' A payment would be made on the basis of a flat rate per day when the cycle is used for authorised business purposes. The current rate is £2.44 per day or 20p per mile (whichever is the greater).
	Travel	This is on the basis of standard class rail travel together with the cost of reserved seating if required, subject to the journey being on 'approved duties'.
	Other Journeys	Reasonable expenses, supported by receipts, will be reimbursed in full for travel claims using bus, taxi or train to get to a site or meeting away from their normal base and in respect of which the Council did not provide transport.,
	Meals	Members are entitled to claim subsistence expenses in situations where they are working or are on a conference/seminar/training course away from their base and do not arrive home until after 8.30 pm. To be eligible they must necessarily incur expenditure and be on official business more than 3 miles from their home, administrative centre or establishment where they normally take their meals. Upon production of receipts, Members will be reimbursed for their actual expenditure up to the maximum South Gloucestershire allowance (currently £10).

		Claims cannot be made where a meal or buffet is provided, unless the Member has specific dietary requirements which preclude their participating in the arrangements.
	Reimbursement of Expenses	The following situations are to be regarded as "exceptional circumstances". Expenses must relate to 'approved duties' and have actually been incurred and claims supported by receipts.
	Visits Abroad	In these circumstances the type of expenses which will be eligible for reimbursement will be agreed with the Member in advance, by the Chief Executive or an officer authorised to act on their behalf, and all reasonable claims for accommodation, meals and refreshments will be reimbursed.
	Meetings/Conference/Training /Seminars involving one or more over-night stays away from home	Where these involve one or more overnight stays away from home, the type of expenses which will be eligible for reimbursement will be agreed with the Member in advance by the Chief Executive or an officer authorised to act on their behalf, and all reasonable claims for accommodation and meals will be reimbursed.
	Situations involving long distance travel	In situations where a Member, in order to attend a Meeting, Conference, Training Event or Seminar, is required to leave home before 6.30 am, then the cost of breakfast will be reimbursed.

Appendix 3

Ill-health Absence and Parental Leave

1 **Absence from Duties**

3.1 The Council recognises that a member may during the course of their term of appointment be absent from their duties as a councillor. The Council recognises a number of categories of leave, details of which are set out below.

3.2 In respect of each of these categories of leave, members attendance is subject to the Local Government Act 1972 s85 (see para 12 of the scheme). Any absence beyond a period of 6 months as defined by s85 will require the prior approval of Council.

3.3 Requests for approval of an extended absence of leave for the reasons set out in para 2 below may contain a request for the continued payment of an SRA. Any request for the continued payment of an SRA beyond 6 months must set out good reasons for the continuation of the payment.

4. Long term absence

4.1 Ill Health Absence - Members will continue to receive their full basic allowance and any applicable SRA's where they are unable to undertake approved duties due to illness for a period of up to six months.

4.2 Maternity Leave: (can commence from 11 weeks before the baby is due as referenced on your MATB1).Being a councillor will not prevent you from being entitled to benefit from any scheme provided by your employer if you are employed elsewhere. Equally being a councillor will not prevent you from claiming statutory maternity pay (SMP) if you are entitled to.

4.3 Adoption Leave (from the date of placement): a Member who adopts a child through an approved adoption agency.

4.4 Other Parental Leave provisions: the Council recognises other forms of parental leave as set out below. The periods of absence associated with these types of leave would not ordinarily be expected to exceed 6 months.

4.4.1 Paternity Leave: Members may take up to 2 weeks of paternity leave when their partner/wife has given birth, is adopting a child or having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement, and the Member will share the responsibility for bringing up the child. Members may choose to take one or two consecutive weeks of paternity leave.

4.4.2 Parental Leave: Members may take up to 18 weeks leave to care for a child up to the age of 18 years old, or from the date of adoption up to the age of 18. Leave can be taken in blocks of between one and four weeks in any one year (part weeks count as one week).

4.4.3 Shared Parental Leave: A member who has made a shared parental leave arrangement through their employment is requested to advise the Council of these at the earliest possible opportunity. Every effort will be made to replicate such arrangements in terms of leave from the Council.

5. Payment of Allowances during absence

5.1 Members shall for a period of up to 6 months continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full during this period of leave.

5.2 Members entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall for a period of up to 6 months continue to receive their allowance in full during this period of leave, provided the absence is due to a reason set out in paragraph 2 above.

6. Notification of absence

6.1 Members must notify their Group Leader of a period of absence due to ill-health at the earliest opportunity. Members must notify their Group Leader of their intention to take maternity leave or adoption leave and agree the expected start/return dates or any request for extension of leave at the earliest opportunity. Members should also inform their Group Leader of other parental leave requests. Group Leaders must inform the Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer of periods of absence to enable proper recording to ensure members comply with their legal duties under the Local Government Act 1972 (see 1.2 above).

7. Resigning from Office and Elections

7.1 If a Member decides not to return at the end of their maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave they must notify the Council at the earliest possible opportunity. All allowances will cease from the effective resignation date.

7.2 If an election is held during the Member's period of leave and they are not re-elected, or decide not to stand for re-election, their basic allowance and SRA if appropriate will cease from the Monday after the election date when they would technically leave office.

Appendix 4

APPROVED DUTIES FOR THE PAYMENT OF MEMBERS TRAVEL, SUBSISTENCE AND CARER'S ALLOWANCES

All formal meetings which form part of the Council's constitution and where the councillor is:

(a) a member of the body concerned;

(b) is acting as a substitute or where they have been specifically invited to attend or;

(c) where a councillor is attending to speak on an issue on behalf of the constituents of their ward.

- Attendance at tender opening sessions where required by Standing Orders.
- Councillors' seminars called under the provision of Standing Orders.
- Training and development activities under the Councillors Development Programme.
- Approved external conferences.
- Meetings of outside bodies to which appointed.
- Ward Surgeries
- Attendance by executive councillors or other office holders (i.e., those in receipt of special responsibility allowances) at briefings, meetings or events (either within South Gloucestershire or outside) in their official capacities and in the furtherance of their official duties).
- Travel undertaken by the Chair and Vice Chair in connection with their official duties where council transport is not provided.

Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen

The Local Government Act 1972 gives principal councils the power to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' and 'Honorary Alderwoman' on persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Council as past members of that Council, but who are no longer members of the Council.

The Act does not specify how eminent services are defined, and this is left as a matter of local interpretation. The criteria to be used to select Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen for appointment at South Gloucestershire Council are:

- The title of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman can only be conferred to a past member of this Authority.
- Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen must have served 12 yrs.in total. For the purpose of calculating 12 yrs. service terms can be aggregated provided there has not been a break of more than four years between any terms served.
- An Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman must have demonstrated an exemplary service and contribution to the Council during their time served as a Councillor.

APPOINTMENTS OF HONORARY ALDERMEN AND ALDERWOMEN

Appointments of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen must take place at a Council meeting specially convened for the purpose. The meeting can occur on the same date of another full Council meeting. The nomination(s) will be proposed and seconded and require not less than two thirds of the members present at the meeting to vote in favour of a resolution for the nominee(s) to be appointed.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HONORARY ALDERMEN AND ALDERWOMEN

The title of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman does not confer any special privileges or rights upon the appointee to speak or vote at Council meetings, beyond the rights and privileges already afforded to the public. Section 249 of The Local Government Act 1972 provides that:

Whilst an Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman may attend and take part in such civic ceremonies as the Council may from time to time decide, they shall not have the right:

- to attend meetings of the Council or a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council in any capacity other than as a member of the public, or
- to receive any allowances or other payments as are payable to Councillors

No Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman shall, while serving as a Councillor, be entitled to be addressed as Honorary Alderman/Honorary Alderwoman or to attend or take part in any civic ceremonies of the Council as an Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman.

The only rights that are conferred to an Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman by virtue of their appointment is to be invited to civic functions and events by invitation of the Council. The Council will decide to which civic functions and events it is appropriate to invite Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen.

The role of Honorary Alderman/Honorary Alderwoman is an honorary one, but to the public an Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman is perceived to be a representative of the Council. In taking up this role all Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen must agree and adhere to the protocol laid down by this Council. There are two key elements:

- That the person becoming Alderman/Alderwoman does so in the full knowledge that they are perceived to be representative of the civic element of the Council and must act to the highest standards and in accepting the honorary title they agree to continue to act in such a way as to demonstrate and promote high ethical standards of behaviour in accordance with the Seven Principals of Public Life (The Nolan Principles) so as to ensure their behaviour does not have a detrimental impact on the Council or bring the Council in to disrepute.

- In taking this role, the Alderman/Alderwoman becomes apolitical in public when acting as or when holding themselves out as an Alderman/Alderwoman knowing that any views expressed may be interpreted as views of the Council. Aldermen/Alderwomen are not to speak on behalf of the Council or to give the impression that they are speaking on behalf of the Council.

REMOVAL OF TITLE OF HONORARY ALDERMAN AND ALDERWOMEN

There may be occasions where, due to the past or future behaviour of individuals who have been appointed as Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen, the Council may wish to remove the title from an individual in order to protect the reputation of the Council.

Removal of the title of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman will follow the same process as appointment (proposed and seconded, and then a resolution of two thirds of those present must be passed). However a decision on the removal it may take place at any meeting of Full Council rather than a specially convened meeting.