

SECTION 12

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

Members and co-opted Members of County Durham and Darlington Combined Fire Authority (“the Authority”) are expected to undertake their duties as follows:

1. Represent the community and work constructively with employees and partner organisations to ensure the area is a safer place to live, work and visit.
2. Behave in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for residents and maintain public confidence in the Authority:
 - a. **Selflessness:** act solely in terms of the public interest and not act in such a way as to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or friends.
 - b. **Integrity:** not placing themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
 - c. **Objectivity:** make choices on merit, in carrying out public business, including when making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.
 - d. **Accountability:** be accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
 - e. **Openness:** be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take, and give reasons for decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest or the law clearly demands.
 - f. **Honesty:** declare any private interests relating to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
 - g. **Leadership:** promote and support these principles by leadership and example.
3. Act in accordance with the principles in paragraph 2 and, in particular:
 - (a) Champion the needs of residents - the whole community and all constituents, including those who did not vote for them - and put the public interest first.
 - (b) Deal with representations or enquiries from residents, members of our communities and visitors fairly, appropriately and impartially.
 - (c) Not allow other pressures, including the financial interests of themselves or others connected to them, to deter them from pursuing the interests of the Authority or the good governance of the Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service in a proper manner.
 - (d) Exercise independent judgement and not compromise their position by placing themselves under obligations to outside individuals or organisations who might seek to influence the way they perform their duties as a Member / Co-opted Member of the Authority.

- (e) Listen to the interests of all parties, including relevant advice from statutory and other professional officers, take all relevant information into consideration, remain objective and make decisions on merit.
- (f) Be accountable for decisions and cooperate when scrutinised internally and externally, including by local residents.
- (g) Contribute to making the Authority's decision-making processes as open and transparent as possible to ensure residents understand the reasoning behind those decisions and are informed when holding the Authority to account but restricting access to information when the wider public interest or the law requires it.
- (h) Behave in accordance with all legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within the Authority's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Authority's resources.
- (i) Value colleagues and staff and engage with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect that is essential to good local government.
- (j) Always treat people with respect, including the organisations and public they engage with and work alongside.
- (k) Provide leadership through behaving in accordance with these principles when championing the interests of the community with other organisations as well as within this Authority.
- (l) Not disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone or information acquired, which they believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, without express authority and/or unless the law requires it.

4. Gifts and Hospitality

- 4.1 Members must, within 28 days of receipt, notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of any gift, benefit or hospitality with a value in excess of £50 which they have been offered as a member from any person or body other than the Authority, whether the offer is accepted or declined.
- 4.2 The Monitoring Officer will place any notification received under paragraph 4.1 on a public register of gifts and hospitality.
- 4.3 The duty to notify the Monitoring Officer does not apply where the gift, benefit or hospitality has been approved by the Authority for this purpose.

5. Register of Interests

- 5.1 Members must:
 - (a) register and, where appropriate, disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests that they are obliged to declare under the Localism Act and associated regulations; and
 - (b) register details of their membership of any organisation or body whose rules or requirements of membership could be regarded as suggesting a degree of loyalty to that organisation or body. This could arise by reason

of an organisation having an obligation of secrecy about its rules, its membership or conduct and/or a commitment of allegiance or support to that organisation or body. Such organisations or bodies may or may not be charitable concerns and they may also have a local, regional, national or international aspect; and

(c) register details of my membership of any trade union within the meaning of Section 1 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

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

6. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests Entered on the Register

- 6.1 If Members are present at a meeting of the Authority and
- (a) they are aware that they have a disclosable pecuniary interest under paragraph 5.1(a) above in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting; and
 - (b) the interest is entered in the Authority's register
- they may not participate in any discussion or further discussion of an item of business or in any vote or further vote taken on that item which affects or relates to the subject matter in which they have such an interest; and they will leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion or voting takes place.

7. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests NOT Entered on the Register

- 7.1 If Members are present at a meeting of the Authority and
- (a) aware that they have a disclosable pecuniary interest under paragraph 5.1(a) above in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting; **and**
 - (b) the interest is not entered in the Authority's register,
- they must disclose the interest to the meeting. Furthermore, they may not participate or further participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting or participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting and will leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion or voting takes place.
- 7.2 If an interest referred to in 7.1 above is not entered on the Authority's register and is not the subject of a pending registration, Members must notify the Authority's Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the date of the disclosure.

7.3 Members with the power to discharge an Authority function acting alone will have a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter to be dealt with or being dealt with by them in the course of discharging that function:

(a) they may not take any steps, or any further steps, in relation to the matter (except for the purpose of enabling the matter to be dealt with otherwise than by them); **and**

(b) If the interest is not entered on the Council's register and is not the subject of a pending registration, they must notify the Authority's Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of becoming aware of the interest.

8. Other Relevant Interests

8.1 Members may have an Other Relevant Interest (which is not a disclosable pecuniary interest) in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting) where:

(a) a decision in relation to that matter might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of them or a member of their family or a person with whom they have a close association, or an organisation or body under paragraph 5.1(b) or 5.1(c) above, to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which they have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area; **and**

(b) the interest is one that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice their judgement of the public interest.

8.2 Members with an Other Relevant Interest as described in 8.1. above,—

(a) must make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent; **and**

(b) must not participate in any discussion or further discussion of an item of business or in any vote or further vote taken on that item which affects or relates to the subject matter in which they have an Other Relevant Interest at any meeting at which they are present and will leave the room where the meeting is held while any discussion or voting takes place.