

# **COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT**

## **Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council**

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### **1. Purpose**

This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour expected from councillors of Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council.

The Code promotes:

- High standards of conduct
- Transparency and accountability
- Public confidence in local government

This Code is based on the model produced by the National Association of Local Councils under provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

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### **2. Scope**

This Code applies whenever councillors are:

- Acting in their official capacity as a councillor
  - Representing the council
  - Attending council meetings or events
  - Communicating on behalf of the council
  - Using council resources or social media in a council capacity
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### **3. General Principles**

Councillors must follow the principles of public life (Nolan Principles):

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

These principles underpin all conduct expected of councillors.

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## 4. Respect and Behaviour

Councillors must:

- Treat others with respect
- Promote equality and fairness
- Not bully, harass or intimidate others
- Not use offensive or abusive language
- Work constructively with councillors, officers and members of the public

Councillors must not conduct themselves in a way that could bring the council into disrepute.

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## 5. Use of Council Resources

Council resources must:

- Only be used for council business
- Not be used for personal, political or financial gain
- Be used responsibly and lawfully

This includes council email systems, equipment and documents.

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## 6. Confidential Information

Councillors must not:

- Disclose confidential information
- Use confidential information for personal benefit

Confidential information includes:

- Personnel matters
  - Legal advice
  - Commercial information
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## 7. Interests and Declarations

Councillors must comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 regarding **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs)**.

Councillors must:

- Register their interests
- Declare interests at meetings
- Leave the meeting when required

Failure to register or declare interests may be a criminal offence.

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## 8. Attendance and Absence

Councillors are expected to attend council meetings regularly.

Under the Local Government Act 1972:

A councillor who **fails to attend any meeting of the council for six consecutive months** automatically ceases to be a councillor unless the council approves a reason for absence before the six-month period expires.

Acceptable reasons may include:

- Illness
- Work commitments
- Family circumstances
- Other exceptional circumstances

Councillors must notify the Clerk if they are unable to attend meetings.

The council may grant **formal leave of absence** where appropriate.

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## 9. Misconduct

Misconduct may include:

- Bullying or harassment
- Failure to declare interests
- Breach of confidentiality
- Disrespectful behaviour towards councillors, staff or the public
- Misuse of council resources
- Behaviour that damages the reputation of the council

Where misconduct occurs, the matter may be referred to the **Monitoring Officer at the principal authority**.

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# 10. Complaints Procedure

Complaints about councillor conduct should normally be submitted to the **Monitoring Officer** of the relevant principal authority.

The Monitoring Officer may:

- Investigate the complaint
- Attempt mediation
- Refer the matter to a standards committee

The council itself cannot suspend councillors but may take steps to manage behaviour within meetings.

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# 11. Conduct During Meetings

Councillors must:

- Follow Standing Orders
- Respect the authority of the Chair
- Speak through the Chair
- Avoid interrupting others

Disruptive behaviour may result in the councillor being asked to leave the meeting.

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# 12. Social Media Conduct

Councillors must:

- Avoid making defamatory or offensive comments
- Not present personal opinions as council policy
- Respect confidentiality and data protection

Social media behaviour that damages the reputation of the council may constitute misconduct.

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# 13. Training and Awareness

Councillors are encouraged to attend training provided by the:

- National Association of Local Councils
- Society of Local Council Clerks

Training may include:

- Councillor responsibilities

- Governance and ethics
  - Data protection and transparency
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## 14. Breach of the Code

Where a breach is suspected:

1. The matter may be raised informally with the councillor.
2. A complaint may be made to the Monitoring Officer.
3. The Monitoring Officer will determine whether an investigation is required.

Possible outcomes may include:

- Advice or training
  - Mediation
  - Formal investigation
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## 15. Review of the Code

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed:

- Every four years
  - Following legislative changes
  - Following updates to the NALC Model Code
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## 16. Adoption

Adopted

by:

**Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Good Practice Notes (SLCC/NALC)

- Do **not** approve absence retrospectively
- Avoid recording sensitive medical details in public minutes
- The councillor **does not vote** on the resolution concerning their own absence
- Approval must be by the **full Council**, not a committee

