

Wecock Neighbourhood Board – Code of Conduct

Introduction

This Code of Conduct is based on the Local Government Association's Model Councillor Code of Conduct. The role of board member of a neighbourhood board is a public role in civic society, with the board representing the residents of that neighbourhood. The role consequently requires many of the same behaviours and principles which councillors must abide by.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a "board member" means a member or co-opted member of a neighbourhood board or a directly recruited chair of the board.

A "co-opted member" is a person who is not a member of the neighbourhood board but who is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the neighbourhood board, or represents the neighbourhood board on any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the neighbourhood board, 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, "neighbourhood board" means the board established to oversee the Pride in Place programme in the Wecock area.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a board member, 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 intended to protect you, the public, fellow board members and the reputation of the neighbourhood board.

The Code sets out the general principles of conduct expected of all board members and specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of a board member and in the neighbourhood board.

General Principles of Board Member Conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels, and all who serve the public or deliver public services, should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles. These principles are included in Appendix A.

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.
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of a board member.

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.
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with the neighbourhood board's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you accept your role as a board member or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member, and continues to apply until you cease to be a board member.

The Code applies when you are acting in your capacity as a board member, including where 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 board member.

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

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

You are expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a board member. The accountable body, initially Havant Borough Council, has responsibility for the implementation of this Code of Conduct. You are encouraged to seek advice from the accountable body on any matters that may relate to the Code.

Standards of Board Member Conduct

This section sets out the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a board member. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

1. Respect

As a board member:

1. I treat other board members and members of the public with respect.
2. I treat officers of the accountable body, employees and representatives of partner organisations, and those volunteering for the neighbourhood board, with respect and recognise the role they play.

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

2. Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

As a board member:

1. I do not bully any person.
2. I do not harass any person.
3. I promote equality and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

Bullying may include offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the recipient. Harassment may include conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence. Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

3. Confidentiality and Access to Information

As a board member:

1. I do not disclose confidential information unless I have authority to do so, am required by law to do so, or disclosure is reasonable, in the public interest, made in good faith and in line with the requirements of the neighbourhood board.
2. I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a board member for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.
3. I do not prevent anyone from accessing information to which they are entitled by law.

The neighbourhood board should work openly and transparently. However, there may be times when discussions, documents or other information must be treated as confidential, such as personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

4. Disrepute

As a board member:

1. I do not bring my role or the neighbourhood board into disrepute.

Board members are trusted to make decisions on behalf of their community and their actions may be subject to scrutiny. Behaviour that is dishonest, deceitful or otherwise inappropriate may lower public confidence in the board and its work.

5. Use of Position

As a board member:

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 board member provides opportunities, responsibilities and privileges. You should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests, or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

6. Use of Neighbourhood Board Resources and Facilities

As a board member:

1. I do not misuse neighbourhood board resources.
2. When using the resources of the neighbourhood board, or authorising their use by others, I act in accordance with the neighbourhood board's requirements and ensure that resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as supporting the work of the neighbourhood board.

Resources and facilities may include office support, stationery, equipment such as phones and computers, and transport. They are provided to help board members carry out their duties and must not be used for business or personal gain.

7. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a board member:

1. I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by the neighbourhood board or accountable body.
2. I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.
3. I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings.
4. I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is important for board members to demonstrate high standards, to have their actions open to scrutiny, and not to undermine public trust in the neighbourhood board or its governance.

8. Protecting Your Reputation and the Reputation of the Neighbourhood Board

As a board member:

1. I register and disclose my interests.

The accountable body is required to establish and maintain a register of interests for members of the neighbourhood board. You are personally responsible for deciding whether you should disclose an interest in a meeting. If in doubt, you should seek advice from the accountable body.

9. Gifts and Hospitality

As a board member:

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.
2. I register with the accountable body any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.
3. I register with the accountable body any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

To protect your position and the reputation of the neighbourhood board, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality offered because of your role. The presumption should be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality unless there is a clear and appropriate reason to do so, in which case it should be registered where required.

10. Confirmation

I confirm that I have read and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct so long as I remain a member of the Wecock Neighbourhood Board.

Signed:

_____ Date: _____

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

- **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 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 doing so.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour, actively promote and robustly support them, and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.