

WESTMINSTER CODE OF CONDUCT	LGA MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT
General observations	
The terms “Councillor” and “Co-Opted Member” are not defined.	The term Councillor is defined as ‘a Member or Co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor’ pursuant to Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 (pg 2 of the Model Code).
WCC Council approved a social media policy in June 2019. This is not part of the Councillor’s code of conduct Appendix 1 - Draft guidance on the use of social media by members.pdf (westminster.gov.uk)	The New Model Code specifically applies to ‘electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments’ (in the Application Section on pg 4 of the Model Code).
	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>No update in relation to timescales</p>

	General conduct
<p>Paragraph 9 WCC Code of Conduct</p> <p>To value and respect colleagues, staff, partners and the public, engaging with them in an appropriate manner that underpins the mutual respect between them that is essential to good local government, and not to act in a manner that could be deemed to be bullying, harassment or intimidation.</p>	<p>1. Respect</p> <p>As a councillor:</p> <p>1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Paragraph 9 of WCC code

To value and respect colleagues, staff, partners and the public, engaging with them in an appropriate manner that underpins the mutual respect between them that is essential to good local government, and not to act in a manner that could be deemed to be bullying, harassment or intimidation.

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.

There is a separate councillor/ officer protocol in the WCC constitution

Paragraph 3 WCC code

To make all decisions on merit when carrying out public duties, such as making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

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.

Paragraph 8 WCC code

To behave in accordance with all legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within the City Council's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Council's resources and dealing with confidential information appropriately.

Paragraph 1 WCC code

To act solely in the public interest and never to improperly confer or seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, friends or close associates.

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.

<p>Paragraph 4 WCC code</p> <p>To be accountable for their decisions to the public and to co-operate fully with whatever scrutiny is required. (LGA 6)</p> <p>Paragraph 5 WCC code</p> <p>To be open and as transparent as possible about decisions and actions and the decisions and actions of the City Council and to give reasons for those decisions and actions</p> <p>Paragraph 10 WCC code</p> <p>To promote and support high standards of conduct through leadership and by example, including not acting in a manner which could be seen to bring the Council or the role of the Councillor into disrepute.</p>	<p>5. Disrepute</p> <p>As a councillor:</p> <p>5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.</p> <p>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/it’s functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Paragraph 1 WCC code</p> <p>To act solely in the public interest and never to improperly confer or seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, friends or close associates.</p> <p>Paragraph 2 WCC code</p> <p>Not to place themselves under a financial or other obligation to any individual or organisation that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.</p>	<p>6. Use of position</p> <p>As a councillor:</p> <p>6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.</p> <p>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.</p>

Paragraph 7 of WCC code

When using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the City Council , to ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) and to have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

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 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.

No equivalent paragraph in the WCC code.

Annual training is arranged for Members in relation to the Code of Conduct and the arrangements for investigating complaints

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

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

8.4 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.

	<p>Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority</p>
<p>Paragraph 6 WCC code</p> <p>To register and declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and to declare non-disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests, as set out in this Code.</p>	<p>9. Interests</p> <p>As a councillor:</p> <p>9.1 I register and disclose my interests.</p> <p>Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.</p>

WCC code sets the threshold for registering gifts at a value in excess of £25

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 significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

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.