

Protocol Member to Member Relations

Councillors at all times must promote and maintain high standards and adopted a Code of Conduct for Members in line with its obligations under section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011. Members and co-opted members must behave according to the highest standards for personal conduct in everything they do as a Member. In particular they must observe the following 10 principles of conduct as set out in the Code of Conduct, some of which are set out in law:

Selflessness, Honesty & Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Personal Judgement, Respect of others, Duty to uphold the law, Stewardship and Leadership

The Code of Conduct makes it clear that “*Members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability*” (Respect for others). This applies to all circumstances including working with other councillors.

All councillors have a responsibility to behave in a way that is not offensive to others and to acknowledge that views and opinions held by other councillors may not always coincide with their own. Such differences being expressed are unlikely to constitute harassment. The Code is therefore not intended to deter from robust political argument and debate, but it does expect that all councillors conduct themselves in accordance with these 10 principles at all times, certainly avoiding any behaviours which could be deemed as bullying, harassing or victimising, in any way.

In this context councillors are responsible for being aware of and understanding the following definitions*:

Bullying is a particular form of harassment and may be characterised as persistent, offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, possibly through an abuse or misuse of position or power where the intention or outcome is to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Examples of bullying include: shouting at others in public or in private; personal insults; ignoring or excluding individuals; persistent, excessive, unfair or unjustified criticism; setting impossible deadlines or targets/objectives or making inconsistent demands. This list is not exhaustive.

Harassment is, in general terms, unwanted, unreasonable and offensive conduct affecting the dignity of the individual. It includes verbal, non-verbal and physical conduct that may be related to age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. Examples of harassment include: unwanted physical contact, offensive jokes or banter, offensive emails, pictures or graffiti, unwelcome sexual advances, exclusion and victimisation. This list is not exhaustive.

Victimisation is treating someone less favourably than others because the individual has, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given

evidence in relation to a complaint. Examples include: Isolating someone because the individual has made a complaint or treating them differently.

Councillors can therefore expect of other Councillors:

- To represent their wards effectively and efficiently
- To strive to do their best for their Wards and constituents of the Borough
- To behave in a manner which accords with the Code of Conduct for Members
- To be respectful and courteous
- To respond to enquiries fairly and efficiently
- To act lawfully and to maintain confidentiality when appropriate to do so
- To maintain confidentiality where it is appropriate to do so
- To have regards to social hours regarding contact
- To consider information for the purpose of making informed judgements
- To treat all councillors in a reasonable manner
- Not to make any inappropriate comment towards another councillor, which could be interpreted as discriminatory, demeaning, abusive or bullying.
- Not to ask Councillor's to breach council policy or procedures, or to act unlawfully
- Not to exert undue influence or pressure, or request special treatment for councillors friends or family members.
- Not to request unauthorised access to resources or information held by the council
- Not to breach confidentiality and disclose any personal/private information about another councillor

Failure to follow the Protocol

Any complaint alleging failure to follow this Protocol would be considered under the *'Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members'*.

Training*

Mandatory training for all Councillors will be provided annually to help support elected Members in understanding equalities, inclusivity and what behaviours may amount to discriminatory behaviour.