



SOMERSET DRAINAGE BOARDS CONSORTIUM
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR BOARD MEMBERS

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Elected members are required to attend at least one Board meeting within a 6 month period. If they fail to do so without Board agreement, they will cease to be a member of the Board.
- 1.2 Members are encouraged to take up membership of sub-committees and working groups, however they should only do so if they are able to provide a high level of attendance.
- 1.3 All members are expected to attend routine and extra-ordinary Board meetings on a consistent basis.
- 1.4 As a public office-holder, your behaviour and actions must be governed by the principles set out in this Code of Conduct. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar with, and comply with all the relevant provisions of the Code.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

- 2.1 The key principles upon which this Code of Conduct is based are the Seven Principle of Public Life². These are:

Selflessness

You should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. You should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family or your friends.

Integrity

You should not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might, or might be perceived to influence you in the performance of your official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including awarding contracts and recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, you should make choices on merit.

Accountability

You are accountable for your decisions and actions to the public and must submit yourself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate for your office.

Openness

You should be as open as possible about the decisions and actions that you take. You should give reasons for your decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

You have a duty to declare any private interests relating to your public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

You should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

2.2 These principles should inform your actions and decisions as a board member.

3. GENERAL CONDUCT

Use of Public Funds

- 3.1 You have a duty to ensure the safeguarding of public funds³ and the proper custody of assets which have been publicly funded.
- 3.2 You must carry out your fiduciary obligations responsibly – that is, take appropriate measures to ensure that the body uses resources efficiently, economically and effectively, avoiding waste and extravagance. It will always be an improper use of public funds for public bodies to employ consultants or other companies to lobby Parliament, Government or political parties.

Allowances

- 3.3 You must comply with the rules set by the Board and the public body regarding remuneration, allowances and expenses. It is your responsibility to ensure compliance with all relevant HM Revenue and Customs' requirements concerning payments including expenses.

Gifts and Hospitality

- 3.4 You must not accept any gifts or hospitality which might, or might reasonably appear to, compromise your personal judgement or integrity or place you under an improper obligation.
- 3.5 You must never canvass or seek gifts or hospitality.
- 3.6 You must comply with the rules set by the body on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality. You should inform the Chief Executive (or equivalent) of any offer of gifts or hospitality and ensure that, where a gift or hospitality is accepted, this is recorded in a public register in line with the rules set by the body.
- 3.7 You are responsible for your decisions on the acceptance of gifts or hospitality and for ensuring that any gifts or hospitality accepted can stand up to public scrutiny and do not bring the public body into disrepute.

Use of Official Resources

- 3.8 You must not misuse official resources⁴ for personal gain or for political purposes. Use of such resources must be in line with the body's rules on their usage.

Use of Official Information

- 3.9 You must not misuse information gained in the course of your public service for personal gain or for political purpose.⁵
- 3.10 You must not disclose any information which is confidential in nature or which is provided in confidence without authority. This duty continues to apply after you have left the board.

Political Activity⁶

- 3.11 In your public role, you should be, and be seen to be, politically impartial. You should not occupy a paid party political post or hold a particularly sensitive or high-profile role in a political party.
- 3.12 On matters directly related to the work of the body, you should not make political statements or engage in any other political activity.
- 3.13 In your official capacity, you should be even-handed in all dealings with political parties.
- 3.14 Subject to the above, you may engage in political activity but should, at all times, remain conscious of your responsibilities as a board member and exercise proper discretion. You should inform the Chair before undertaking any significant political activity.

4. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

- 4.1 You must ensure that no conflict arises, or could reasonably be perceived to arise, between your public duties and your private interests – financial or otherwise.
- 4.2 You must comply with the rules of the body on handling conflicts of interests. As a minimum, these will require you to declare publicly any private interests which may, or may be perceived to, conflict with your public duties⁷. The rules will also require you to remove yourself from the discussion or determination of matters in which you have a direct financial interest. In matters in which you have a non-financial interest, you may provide information the item under discussion but should not participate in the determination of a matter where the interest might suggest a danger of bias.⁸
- 4.3 It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar with the body's rules on handling conflicts of interests, that you comply with these rules and that your entry in the body's register of members' interests is accurate and up-to-date.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AS A BOARD MEMBER

- 5.1 You must act in accordance with the interests of the organisation and not the wishes of the members' parent or sponsoring body. You should play a full and active role in the work of the Board. You should fulfil your duties and responsibilities responsibly and, at all times, act in good faith and in the best interests of the Board.

- 5.2 You should deal with the public and their affairs fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively and sensitively, to the best of your ability. You must not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests.
- 5.3 You must comply with any statutory or administrative requirements relating to your post.
- 5.4 You should respect the principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility. This means that, once the board has made a decision, you should support that decision.
- 5.5 You must not use, or attempt to use, the opportunity of public service to promote your personal interests or those of any connected person, firm, business or other organisation.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS EMPLOYEES

- 6.1 You will treat any staff employed by the body with courtesy and respect. It is expected that employees will show you the same consideration in return.
- 6.2 You will not ask or encourage employees to act in any way which would conflict with their own Code of Conduct.

7. BOARD MEETINGS

- 7.1 You should follow the normal rules of debate as set out in the standing orders and always accede to a ruling by the Chairman. If this does not adequately deal with the issue at point then reference shall be made to the Sedgemoor District Councils Constitution Part 4 Rules and Procedures.

Interpretation:

² *Standards in Public Life: First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life*. Volume 1: Report. CM 2850-I

³ This should be taken to include all forms of receipts from fees, charges and other sources

⁴ This includes facilities, equipment, stationery, telephony and other services

⁵ Board members who misuse information gained by virtue of their position may be liable for breach of confidence under common law or may commit a criminal offence under insider dealing legislation

⁶ If you are a Local Councillor, you are exempt from these requirements - although you should still exercise proper discretion on matters directly related to the work of the body and recognise that certain political activities may be incompatible with your role as a board member abstain from all controversial political activity.

⁷ In general, all financial interests should be declared. When considering what non-financial interests should be declared, you should ask yourself whether a member of the public, acting reasonably, would consider that the interest in question might influence your words, actions or decisions.

⁸ These are common law provisions.

Adopted

Axe Brue IDB: 02 April 2012

Parrett IDB: 08 January 2013