

Full Council

Report Title:	Oxfordshire Code of Conduct
Meeting Date:	15 November 2022
Contact Officer:	Mandy Sturdy, Town Clerk Lizzie Fuller, Committee Services Officer

Purpose of the Report

1. To adopt the new Oxfordshire Councils' Code of Conduct.

Background

2. Thame Town Council currently has a Code of Conduct (Appendix A) (as published by the National Association of Local Councils) which is reviewed every 4 years at the Annual Meeting.
3. The Oxfordshire Secretaries and Monitoring Officers Group (OSMOG) have recently agreed a model Code of Conduct (Appendix B) to be applied on a countywide basis and which is intended to provide consistency across all tiers of local government.
4. The Code of Conduct has been adapted from the one proposed by the Local Government Association (LGA) which was subject to a public consultation in 2020.
5. The Code of Conduct was adopted by South Oxfordshire and VOWH District Councils in May 2022. The Monitoring Officers are asking that all Town and Parish Councils now also adopt this Code of Conduct at their earliest opportunity so that all Oxfordshire councillors are covered by the same Code.

Oxfordshire Code of Conduct

6. Officers attended online training from SODC in August, and training was offered to Councillors in September and October (see Appendix C – training presentation).
7. Officers have reviewed the following:
 - *Delegations Policy* – no changes required. The Monitoring Officer has confirmed our policy is acceptable.
 - *Gifts & Hospitality Register* – minor change to section 9 (see Appendix D). Councillors would be required under the new code to declare any significant gifts/hospitality that they have been offered but declined.
8. Some points of note:
 - All Councillors will be required to undertake Code of Conduct training.
 - Code now includes wellbeing (defined in section 7.2) and places greater focus on non-financial interests being disclosed.

- Allotments need to be declared as a License – but note TTC’s Dispensations Policy covers allotment holders under Section 4.1.6.
- There are now three categories of Interest:
 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
 - Other Registrable Interests
 - Non-Registrable Interests

Register of Interests

9. A new Register of Interests Form has been provided by SODC (Appendix E). The changes have been highlighted in red text.

10. **All Councillors will need to complete the new Register of Interests form when the new Code of Conduct is adopted.**

Resource Appraisal

11. There are no additional resource requirements identified.

Risk Assessment

12. The document is a legal requirement for the Governance of a Town Council.

13. Not agreeing to sign the new Code may have a negative impact on the reputation of the council when other authorities and councils are signing up to it.

Legal Powers:

- Localism Act 2011
- The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Recommendation

It is recommended...

- i) ***The Oxfordshire Code of Conduct is adopted, and all Councillors complete the Training and updated Register of Interests Form.***