



## **Housing Management Board**

### **Code of Conduct**

#### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide clear guidance to members of the Housing Management Board (HMB) on acceptable standards of conduct required of its members.
2. All members of the HMB must adhere to the terms of the Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference at all times.
3. This document should be read in conjunction with the HMB terms of reference, and the Nolan Committee "Seven Principles of Public Life" (see appendix 1).

#### **Conduct - general**

4. All HMB members should be familiar with the seven principles established by the Nolan Committee: selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; leadership.
5. In carrying out the day-to-day business of the HMB, members must be aware of their responsibility to act in a fair, open, transparent and responsive manner.
6. All members of the HMB will: actively engage in discussions; contribute positively; listen carefully; challenge sensitively; and, avoid conflict.
7. All members of the HMB recognise that others may have different points of view, and that all perspectives should be acknowledged. However, any differences should not impede discussion or prevent the HMB from carrying out its work.
8. In conducting day-to-day business all members of the HMB will respect confidentiality. Any confidential information discussed at meetings will be identified as such, and members should maintain the confidentiality of the information and never disclose it to anyone, except with the express permission by the person or persons concerned.
9. Members of the HMB are jointly responsible for their decisions and actions. Decisions will be taken by majority vote and recorded in the minutes. Once a decision is made, all members of the HMB must follow that decision, even if they did not vote for it.

10. Should any member of the HMB feel they require further guidance or training, they should approach the Resident Involvement Team for guidance or to explore training options.
11. If a HMB member fails to attend three consecutive meetings without giving accepted apologies, the member shall be deemed to have resigned from the HMB. Having missed two consecutive meetings without explanation the relevant council officer will write to the individual outlining the consequences of missing another meeting.
12. All HMB members have a duty to feed back at the first opportunity to the HMB any business they have undertaken on the HMB's behalf.

### **Conduct during meetings**

13. The Chair, Vice-Chair, or whoever is presiding at the meeting shall have control of the conduct of the meeting.
14. Members will do their best to arrive at meetings on time and, if arriving late, should take a seat quietly and apologise.
15. Members must be polite and courteous at all times during meetings.
16. Members must respect others' perspectives, and allow each other to speak.
17. Members must always bear in mind that the purpose of the meeting is to benefit tenant and leaseholders of Stevenage Borough Council, and not specific individuals.
18. Grievances concerning conduct during a meeting should be brought to the attention of the Chair. In the event of a breach of the Code of Conduct, the relevant council officer will issue a warning. Should the warning not be heeded, the Chair will have the right to ask any attendee to leave the meeting.

### **Conduct – written communication**

19. Written communication refers to any written communication both between members of the HMB and between the HMB and external individuals or bodies. It includes, but is not exclusive to: letters; emails; text messages; instant messenger; any VOIP communications (such as Skype); Facebook; and, Twitter.
20. Any formal communication on behalf of the HMB will normally be undertaken by the Chair, Vice-Chair, or a nominated officer of SBC.

### **Conflict of Interest**

21. A conflict of interest may arise where a member's personal or family interests and/or loyalties may conflict with those of the HMB.

22. Accordingly, all members of the HMB must declare their interests, including any gifts or hospitality received in connection with their role within the HMB with an estimated value of at least £25. New interests should be declared at the earliest opportunity, normally at the next HMB meeting.
23. If you are unsure as to whether you have a conflict of interest, you should raise your concerns with the Resident Involvement Team at the earliest opportunity.

#### **Code of Conduct – dealing with a breach**

24. Any member of the HMB should alert the rest of the HMB to a breach in the Code of Conduct either by raising the issue directly with the Chair or the Resident Involvement Team.
25. Any allegations of a breach must be backed up either by evidence or by at least two corroborating independent witnesses.
26. The process for dealing with a breach is set out below:
  - **Stage 1.** An informal discussion will be held between the Chair and the member who is alleged to have breached the Code. The Chair and member should discuss the breach and agree a way forward, such as an apology to the group or a written commitment from the member that they will not breach the Code again. It should be noted at the following HMB meeting that an informal discussion was held.
  - **Stage 2.** Following the informal discussion, should the breach continue, the Chair should issue a formal written warning to the member in question, and let them know that a continuation of the breach or a further breach will result in the case being referred to the HMB.
  - **Stage 3.** Should the breach continue after Stage 2, the case should be brought before a closed HMB meeting, convened as quickly as possible after the breach (ideally within 15 working days). The member under investigation should not be present at the closed meeting. HMB members must have at least 48 hours' notice of the meeting. The HMB will hear the case, and vote by simple majority to either suspend the member in question or to allow them to continue.
27. The suspended member would only be permitted to become a member again with the permission of the HMB, by majority vote.
28. If the suspended member wishes to appeal the decision, he/she should make his application to the Chair in writing within 14 days of the suspension. The Chair should then refer the case to senior management who will hear the case.
29. The senior manager/s should then hear the appeal within 28 days and vote whether or not to accept or reject the evidence presented to them.

30. The decision of the senior manager/s is binding and will have immediate impact. If the appeal is upheld, the member concerned can rejoin the HMB. If the appeal is rejected, refer to item 26.
31. Should the member alleged to have breached the Code of Conduct be the Chair, or should the Chair have an interest in the case, another member of the HMB will be nominated by three further members of the HMB to undertake the Chair's duties in the breach process outlined above.
32. This Code of Conduct shall not be altered except by agreement of the HMB where amendments must be carried by a simple majority of the members.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Nolan Committee The Committee on Standards in Public Life**

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#### **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

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##### **Selflessness**

You should take decisions solely on the basis of the values and objectives of the Association. You should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family or friends.

##### **Integrity**

You should avoid placing yourself under any obligations, financial or otherwise, to outside individuals or organisations that might influence you in the performance of your duties.

##### **Objectivity**

You should ensure that in the delivery of services, the appointment of staff or the awarding of contracts, you maintain impartiality and base decisions on merit alone.

##### **Accountability**

You must accept accountability for your decisions and actions and submit yourself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate such as by the boards of management or trustees, residents, the providers of public funds and other stakeholders.

##### **Openness**

You should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that you take. You should give reasons for your decisions and restrict information only when individual or commercial confidentiality clearly so demand.

##### **Honesty**

You must declare any private interests relating to your duties, and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that is lawful and protects the reputation, values and mission of the Association.

##### **Leadership**

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