



Cairngorms National Park Authority

Code of Conduct for Board Members

Adopted by Board 13 September 2024; Approved for implementation 1 October 2024

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Section One: Introduction to the Code of Conduct

- 1.1 This Code has been issued by the Scottish Ministers, with the approval of the Scottish Parliament, as required by the [Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2000 \(the “Act”\)](#).
- 1.2 The purpose of the Code is to set out the conduct expected of those who serve on the boards of public bodies in Scotland.
- 1.3 The Code has been developed in line with the nine key principles of public life in Scotland. The principles are listed in [Section 2](#) and set out how the provisions of the Code should be interpreted and applied in practice.

My Responsibilities

- 1.4 I understand that the public has a high expectation of those who serve on the boards of public bodies and the way in which they should conduct themselves in undertaking their duties. I will always seek to meet those expectations by ensuring that I conduct myself in accordance with the Code.
- 1.5 I will comply with the substantive provisions of this Code, being sections 3 to 6 inclusive, in all situations and at all times where I am acting as a board member of my public body, have referred to myself as a board member or could objectively be considered to be acting as a board member.
- 1.6 I will comply with the substantive provisions of this Code, being sections 3 to 6 inclusive, in all my dealings with the public, employees and fellow board members, whether formal or informal.
- 1.7 I understand that it is my personal responsibility to be familiar with the provisions of this Code and that I must also comply with the law and my public body’s rules, standing orders and regulations. I will also ensure that I am familiar with any guidance or advice notes issued by the Standards Commission for Scotland (“Standards Commission”) and my public body, and endeavour to take part in any training offered on the Code.
- 1.8 I will not, at any time, advocate or encourage any action contrary to this Code.



1.9 I understand that no written information, whether in the Code itself or the associated Guidance or Advice Notes issued by the Standards Commission, can provide for all circumstances. If I am uncertain about how the Code applies, I will seek advice from the Standards Officer of my public body, failing whom the Chair or Chief Executive of my public body. I note that I may also choose to seek external legal advice on how to interpret the provisions of the Code.

Enforcement

1.10 [Part 2 of the Act](#) sets out the provisions for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code, including the sanctions that can be applied if the Standards Commission finds that there has been a breach of the Code. More information on how complaints are dealt with and the sanctions available can be found at [Annex A](#).



Section Two: Key Principles of the Code of Conduct

2.1 The Code has been based on the following key principles of public life. I will behave in accordance with these principles and understand that they should be used for guidance and interpreting the provisions in the Code.

2.2 I note that a breach of one or more of the key principles does not in itself amount to a breach of the Code. I note that, for a breach of the Code to be found, there must also be a contravention of one or more of the provisions in sections 3 to 6 inclusive of the Code.

The key principles are:

- a) **Duty** - I have a duty to uphold the law and act in accordance with the law and the public trust placed in me. I have a duty to act in the interests of the public body of which I am a member and in accordance with the core functions and duties of that body.
- b) **Selflessness** - I have a duty to take decisions solely in terms of public interest. I must not act in order to gain financial or other material benefit for myself, family or friends.
- c) **Integrity** - I must not place myself under any financial, or other, obligation to any individual or organisation that might reasonably be thought to influence me in the performance of my duties.
- d) **Objectivity** - I must make decisions solely on merit and in a way that is consistent with the functions of my public body when carrying out public business including making appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.
- e) **Accountability and Stewardship** - I am accountable to the public for my decisions and actions. I have a duty to consider issues on their merits, taking account of the views of others and I must ensure that my public body uses its resources prudently and in accordance with the law.
- f) **Openness** - I have a duty to be as open as possible about my decisions and actions, giving reasons for my decisions and restricting information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- g) **Honesty** - I have a duty to act honestly. I must declare any private interests relating to my public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- h) **Leadership** - I have a duty to promote and support these principles by leadership and example, and to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and



confidence in the integrity of my public body and its members in conducting public business.

- i) **Respect** - I must respect all other board members and all employees of my public body and the role they play, treating them with courtesy at all times. Similarly, I must respect members of the public when performing my duties as a board member.



Section Three: General Conduct

Respect and Courtesy

- 3.1 I will treat everyone with courtesy and respect. This includes in person, in writing, at meetings, when I am online and when I am using social media.
- 3.2 I will not discriminate unlawfully on the basis of race, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, marital status or pregnancy/maternity; I will advance equality of opportunity and seek to foster good relations between different people.
- 3.3 I will not engage in any conduct that could amount to bullying or harassment (which includes sexual harassment). I accept that such conduct is completely unacceptable and will be considered to be a breach of this Code.
- 3.4 I accept that disrespect, bullying and harassment can be:
- a) a one-off incident,
 - b) part of a cumulative course of conduct; or
 - c) a pattern of behaviour.
- 3.5 I understand that how, and in what context, I exhibit certain behaviours can be as important as what I communicate, given that disrespect, bullying and harassment can be physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.
- 3.6 I accept that it is my responsibility to understand what constitutes bullying and harassment and I will utilise resources, including the Standards Commission's guidance and advice notes, my public body's policies and training material (where appropriate) to ensure that my knowledge and understanding is up to date.
- 3.7 Except where it is written into my role as Board member, and / or at the invitation of the Chief Executive, I will not become involved in operational management of my public body. I acknowledge and understand that operational management is the responsibility of the Chief Executive and Executive Team.
- 3.8 I will not undermine any individual employee or group of employees, or raise concerns about their performance, conduct or capability in public. I will raise any



concerns I have on such matters in private with senior management as appropriate.

- 3.9 I will not take, or seek to take, unfair advantage of my position in my dealings with employees of my public body or bring any undue influence to bear on employees to take a certain action. I will not ask or direct employees to do something which I know, or should reasonably know, could compromise them or prevent them from undertaking their duties properly and appropriately.
- 3.10 I will respect and comply with rulings from the Chair during meetings of:
- d) my public body, its committees; and
 - e) any outside organisations that I have been appointed or nominated to by my public body or on which I represent my public body.
- 3.11 I will respect the principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility. This means that once the Board has made a decision, I will support that decision, even if I did not agree with it or vote for it.

Remuneration, Allowances and Expenses

- 3.12 I will comply with the rules, and the policies of my public body, on the payment of remuneration, allowances and expenses.

Gifts and Hospitality

- 3.13 I understand that I may be offered gifts (including money raised via crowdfunding or sponsorship), hospitality, material benefits or services ("gift or hospitality") that may be reasonably regarded by a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts as placing me under an improper obligation or being capable of influencing my judgement.
- 3.14 I will never **ask for** or **seek** any gift or hospitality.
- 3.15 I will refuse any gift or hospitality, unless it is:
- a) a minor item or token of modest intrinsic value offered on an infrequent basis;
 - b) a gift being offered to my public body;
 - c) hospitality which would reasonably be associated with my duties as a board member; or
 - d) hospitality which has been approved in advance by my public body.



- 3.16 I will consider whether there could be a reasonable perception that any gift or hospitality received by a person or body connected to me could or would influence my judgement.
- 3.17 I will not allow the promise of money or other financial advantage to induce me to act improperly in my role as a board member. I accept that the money or advantage (including any gift or hospitality) does not have to be given to me directly. The offer of monies or advantages to others, including community groups, may amount to bribery, if the intention is to induce me to improperly perform a function.
- 3.18 I will never accept any gift or hospitality from any individual or applicant who is awaiting a decision from, or seeking to do business with, my public body.
- 3.19 If I consider that declining an offer of a gift would cause offence, I will accept it and hand it over to my public body at the earliest possible opportunity and ask for it to be registered.
- 3.20 I will promptly advise my public body's Standards Officer if I am offered (but refuse) any gift or hospitality of any significant value and / or if I am offered any gift or hospitality from the same source on a repeated basis, so that my public body can monitor this.
- 3.21 I will familiarise myself with the terms of the [Bribery Act 2010](#), which provides for offences of bribing another person and offences relating to being bribed.

Confidentiality

- 3.22 I will not disclose confidential information or information which should reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential or private nature, without the express consent of a person or body authorised to give such consent, or unless required to do so by law. I note that if I cannot obtain such express consent, I should assume it is not given.
- 3.23 I accept that confidential information can include discussions, documents, and information which is not yet public or never intended to be public, and information deemed confidential by statute.



3.24 I will only use confidential information to undertake my duties as a board member. I will not use it in any way for personal advantage or to discredit my public body (even if my personal view is that the information should be publicly available).

3.25 I note that these confidentiality requirements do not apply to protected whistleblowing disclosures made to the prescribed persons and bodies as identified in statute.

Use of Public Body Resources

3.26 I will only use my public body's resources, including employee assistance, facilities, stationery and IT equipment, for carrying out duties on behalf of the public body, in accordance with its relevant policies.

3.27 I will not use, or in any way enable others to use, my public body's resources:

- a) imprudently (without thinking about the implications or consequences);
- b) unlawfully;
- c) for any political activities or matters relating to these; or
- d) improperly.

Dealing with my Public Body and Preferential Treatment

3.28 I will not use, or attempt to use, my position or influence as a board member to:

- a) improperly confer on or secure for myself, or others, an advantage;
- b) avoid a disadvantage for myself, or create a disadvantage for others or
- c) improperly seek preferential treatment or access for myself or others.

3.29 I will avoid any action which could lead members of the public to believe that preferential treatment or access is being sought.

3.30 I will advise employees of any connection, as defined at [Section 5](#), I may have to a matter, when seeking information or advice or responding to a request for information or advice from them.

Appointments to Outside Organisations

3.31 If I am appointed, or nominated by my public body, as a member of another body or organisation, I will abide by the rules of conduct and will act in the best



interests of that body or organisation while acting as a member of it. I will also continue to observe the rules of this Code when carrying out the duties of that body or organisation.

- 3.32 I accept that if I am a director or trustee (or equivalent) of a company or a charity, I will be responsible for identifying, and taking advice on, any conflicts of interest that may arise between the company or charity and my public body.



Section Four : Registration of Interests

- 4.1 The following paragraphs set out what I have to register when I am appointed and whenever my circumstances change. The register covers my current term of appointment.
- 4.2 I understand that regulations made by the Scottish Ministers describe the detail and timescale for registering interests; including a requirement that a board member must register their registrable interests within one month of becoming a board member, and register any changes to those interests within one month of those changes having occurred.
- 4.3 The interests which I am required to register are those set out in the following paragraphs. Other than as required by paragraph 3.32, I understand it is not necessary to register the interests of my spouse or cohabitee.

Category One: Remuneration

- 4.4 I will register any work for which I receive, or expect to receive, payment. I have a registrable interest where I receive remuneration by virtue of being:
- a) employed;
 - b) self-employed;
 - c) the holder of an office;
 - d) a director of an undertaking;
 - e) a partner in a firm;
 - f) appointed or nominated by my public body to another body; or
 - g) engaged in a trade, profession or vocation or any other work.
- 4.5 I understand that in relation to 4.4 above, the amount of remuneration does not require to be registered. I understand that any remuneration received as a board member of this specific public body does not have to be registered.
- 4.6 I understand that if a position is not remunerated it does not need to be registered under this category. However, unremunerated directorships may need to be registered under Category Two, "Other Roles".
- 4.7 I must register any allowances I receive in relation to membership of any organisation under Category One.



- 4.8 When registering employment as an employee, I must give the full name of the employer, the nature of its business, and the nature of the post I hold in the organisation.
- 4.9 When registering remuneration from the categories listed in paragraph 4.4 (b) to (g) above, I must provide the full name and give details of the nature of the business, organisation, undertaking, partnership or other body, as appropriate. I recognise that some other employments may be incompatible with my role as board member of my public body in terms of paragraph 6.8 of this Code.
- 4.10 Where I otherwise undertake a trade, profession or vocation, or any other work, the detail to be given is the nature of the work and how often it is undertaken.
- 4.11 When registering a directorship, it is necessary to provide the registered name and registered number of the undertaking in which the directorship is held and provide information about the nature of its business.
- 4.12 I understand that registration of a pension is not required as this falls outside the scope of the category.

Category Two: Other Roles

- 4.13 I will register any unremunerated directorships where the body in question is a subsidiary or parent company of an undertaking in which I hold a remunerated directorship.
- 4.14 I will register the registered name and registered number of the subsidiary or parent company or other undertaking and the nature of its business, and its relationship to the company or other undertaking in which I am a director and from which I receive remuneration.

Category Three: Contracts

- 4.15 I have a registerable interest where I (or a firm in which I am a partner, or an undertaking in which I am a director or in which I have shares of a value as described in paragraph 4.20 below) have made a contract with my public body:



- a) under which goods or services are to be provided, or works are to be executed; and
- b) which has not been fully discharged.

4.16 I will register a description of the contract, including its duration, but excluding the value.

Category Four: Election Expenses

4.17 If I have been elected to my public body, then I will register a description of, and statement of, any assistance towards election expenses relating to election to my public body.

Category Five: Houses, Land and Buildings

4.18 I have a registrable interest where I own or have any other right or interest in houses, land and buildings, which may be significant to, of relevance to, or bear upon, the work and operation of my public body.

4.19 I accept that, when deciding whether or not I need to register any interest I have in houses, land or buildings, the test to be applied is whether a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard the interest as being so significant that it could potentially affect my responsibilities to my public body and to the public, or could influence my actions, speeches or decision-making.

Category Six: Interest in Shares and Securities

4.20 I have a registerable interest where:

- a) I own or have an interest in more than 1% of the issued share capital of the company or other body; or
- b) Where, at the relevant date, the market value of any shares and securities (in any one specific company or body) that I own or have an interest in is greater than £25,000.

Category Seven: Gifts and Hospitality

4.21 I understand the requirements of paragraphs [3.13 to 3.21](#) regarding gifts and hospitality. As I will not accept any gifts or hospitality, other than under the



limited circumstances allowed, I understand there is no longer the need to register any.

Category Eight: Non-Financial Interests

4.22 I may also have other interests, and I understand it is equally important that relevant interests such as membership or holding office in other public bodies, companies, clubs, societies and organisations such as trades unions and voluntary organisations, are registered and described. In this context, I understand non-financial interests are those which members of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts might reasonably think could influence my actions, speeches, votes or decision-making in my public body (this includes its Committees and memberships of other organisations to which I have been appointed or nominated by my public body).

Category Nine: Close Family Members

4.23 I will register the interests of any close family member who has transactions with my public body or is likely to have transactions or do business with it.



Section Five: Declaration of Interest

Stage One: Connection

- 5.1 For each particular matter I am involved in as a board member, I will first consider whether I have a connection to that matter.
- 5.2 I understand that a connection is any link between the matter being considered and me, or a person or body I am associated with. This could be a family relationship or a social or professional contact.
- 5.3 A connection includes anything that I have registered as an interest.
- 5.4 A connection does not include being a member of a body to which I have been appointed or nominated by my public body as a representative of my public body, unless:
- a) The matter being considered by my public body is quasi-judicial or regulatory; or
 - b) I have a personal conflict by reason of my actions, my connections or my legal obligations.

Stage Two: Interest

- 5.5 I understand my connection is an interest that requires to be declared where the objective test is met – that is where a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard my connection to a particular matter as being so significant that it would be considered as being likely to influence the discussion or decision-making.

Stage Three: Participation

- 5.6 I will declare my interest as early as possible in meetings. I will not remain in the meeting nor participate in any way in those parts of meetings where I have declared an interest.
- 5.7 I will consider whether it is appropriate for transparency reasons to state publicly where I have a connection, which I do not consider amounts to an interest.



- 5.8 I note that I can apply to the Standards Commission and ask it to grant a dispensation to allow me to take part in the discussion and decision-making on a matter where I would otherwise have to declare an interest and withdraw (as a result of having a connection to the matter that would fall within the objective test). I note that such an application must be made in advance of any meetings where the dispensation is sought and that I cannot take part in any discussion or decision-making on the matter in question unless, and until, the application is granted.
- 5.9 I note that public confidence in a public body is damaged by the perception that decisions taken by that body are substantially influenced by factors other than the public interest. I will not accept a role or appointment if doing so means I will have to declare interests frequently at meetings in respect of my role as a board member. Similarly, if any appointment or nomination to another body would give rise to objective concern because of my existing personal involvement or affiliations, I will not accept the appointment or nomination.



Section Six: Lobbying and Access

- 6.1 I understand that a wide range of people will seek access to me as a board member and will try to lobby me, including individuals, organisations and companies. I must distinguish between:
- any role I have in dealing with enquiries from the public;
 - any community engagement where I am working with individuals and organisations to encourage their participation and involvement, and;
 - lobbying, which is where I am approached by any individual or organisation who is seeking to influence me for financial gain or advantage, particularly those who are seeking to do business with my public body (for example contracts/procurement).
- 6.2 In deciding whether, and if so how, to respond to such lobbying, I will always have regard to the objective test, which is whether a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard my conduct as being likely to influence my, or my public body's, decision-making role.
- 6.3 I will not, in relation to contact with any person or organisation that lobbies, do anything which contravenes this Code or any other relevant rule of my public body or any statutory provision.
- 6.4 I will not, in relation to contact with any person or organisation that lobbies, act in any way which could bring discredit upon my public body.
- 6.5 If I have concerns about the approach or methods used by any person or organisation in their contacts with me, I will seek the guidance of the Chair, Chief Executive or Standards Officer of my public body.
- 6.6 The public must be assured that no person or organisation will gain better access to, or treatment by, me as a result of employing a company or individual to lobby on a fee basis on their behalf. I will not, therefore, offer or accord any preferential access or treatment to those lobbying on a fee basis on behalf of clients compared with that which I accord any other person or organisation who lobbies or approaches me. I will ensure that those lobbying on a fee basis on behalf of clients are not given to understand that preferential access or treatment, compared to that accorded to any other person or organisation, might be forthcoming.



6.7 Before taking any action as a result of being lobbied, I will seek to satisfy myself about the identity of the person or organisation that is lobbying and the motive for lobbying. I understand I may choose to act in response to a person or organisation lobbying on a fee basis on behalf of clients but it is important that I understand the basis on which I am being lobbied in order to ensure that any action taken in connection with the lobbyist complies with the standards set out in this Code and the [Lobbying \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#).

6.8 I will not accept any paid work:

- a) which would involve me lobbying on behalf of any person or organisation or any clients of a person or organisation.
- b) to provide services as a strategist, adviser or consultant, for example, advising on how to influence my public body and its members. This does not prohibit me from being remunerated for activity which may arise because of, or relate to, membership of my public body, such as journalism or broadcasting, or involvement in representative or presentational work, such as participation in delegations, conferences or other events.



Section 7: Taking Decisions on Quasi-Judicial and Regulatory

Matters

7.1 I need to be especially vigilant when I am making a decision on a quasi-judicial or regulatory application. For these applications, I need to ensure there is a proper and fair hearing of the application and I must avoid any impression of bias in the whole decision-making process.

7.2 I may deal with many types of quasi-judicial or regulatory applications. Depending on the type of application that is made, there will often be a formal, statutory decision-making process for its consideration and outcome. There may also be formal legal routes to challenge decisions made on these applications and for this reason I must be aware that my own personal responsibility to ensure a proper and fair hearing has wider consequences for the National Park Authority's reputation and financial liabilities in the event of any challenge.

7.3 Quasi-judicial or regulatory decisions typically involve:

- a) Planning
- b) Access
- c) Licensing
- d) Byelaws and other regulatory activities
- e) Statutory enforcement procedure
- f) Staffing and employment issues within the Board's remit
- g) Statutory appeals and consents

The above list is provided to me only for guidance and is not exhaustive. If I have any doubt as to whether or not my involvement involves a quasi-judicial or regulatory matter, I will seek the advice of the National Park Authority's Monitoring Officer.

Quasi-Judicial and Regulatory Matters

7.4 In dealing with these applications, I will:

- a) Throughout my involvement with the entire application process act fairly and be seen to act fairly.
- b) Declare interests where required in terms of Section five of this Code and leave the meeting until the matter has been determined.



- c) Deal fairly and impartially with all parties involved in the application.
- d) Tell those who may be seeking to influence me out with the proper decision-making process that I will not formulate an opinion on any particular application until all information is available to all decision-makers and has been duly considered at the relevant meeting.
- e) Take into account professional advice given to me by National Park Authority employees.
- f) Seek advice from the relevant National Park Authority employee if I am in doubt as to any material or relevant considerations.

7.5 In dealing with such applications, I will not:

- a) Pre-judge or demonstrate bias or be seen to pre-judge or demonstrate bias.
- b) Indicate or imply support for or opposition to an application nor indicate my voting intention prior to the appropriate meeting where the application will be considered.
- c) In advance of the decision-making meeting, attempt to influence employees to adopt a particular position as that would imply that I am prejudiced in my decision-making.
- d) Lobby other Board Members who may be dealing with the application.
- e) Express any view on the application before the appropriate meeting where the application will be considered. If I do so I will not participate in any aspect of the decision-making nor vote on the application.
- f) Formulate my conclusions on an application until all available information is to hand and has been duly considered by me at the meeting where the application will be considered.
- g) Express any indicative or provisional views in the course of my involvement in any aspect of the application.
- h) Otherwise act improperly or do anything which could reasonably create a perception that I have acted improperly.

Policy and Strategy

7.6 My role in policy and strategic issues may have a very wide relevance to my national park area. For example, I have a key role in establishing policies for the benefit of my national parks area and I am fully entitled to express my genuinely held views or to advocate proposals for the adoption of key guidance. It is entirely appropriate that I can express my views on matters of such general importance to my national park area.



7.7 When I am being asked to develop a policy or feed into any National Park Partnership Plans and / or a Local Development Strategy that forms the framework under which individual applications may subsequently be decided, I understand that I can discuss or debate these items of policy or strategy. However, I will only take into account material considerations affecting the policy or strategic issue and will have regard to the requirement for the adoption of the policy or strategy to be based on facts and evidence. I understand that once a formal process around policy or strategy development has started then a quasi-judicial or regulatory process covered by these provisions should be assumed to be underway.

7.8 For policy and strategic issues under which individual applications may subsequently be decided, I will:

- a) Be able to express my views;
- b) Be able to advocate proposals that I consider to be of benefit to my national park area;
- c) Have regard to the evidence-base behind the formulation of the policy or strategy in question.

I will not:

- d) Do anything or be motivated to do anything that is connected or linked in any way with my personal involvement in a policy or strategic issue;
- e) Express any view that suggests I have a closed mind on the policy or strategic issue regardless of any material considerations affecting that issue.

Representation

7.9 If I intend to be involved in the decision-making for any quasi-judicial or regulatory application, I will not:

- a) Organise support for or opposition to the application in any way;
- b) Represent or appear to represent individuals or groups who are seeking to make representations for or against an application; or
- c) Compromise myself or the National Park Authority by creating a perception of a conflict of interest.

7.10 In circumstances where I am a member of the Board or Committee as a decision maker but have been involved in organising support for or opposition to an application, I will:



- a) Declare an interest in the matter, and
- b) Withdraw from the meeting without participating in the consideration of the matter.

Site Visits

- 7.11 In respect of any site visits that have been decided upon or agreed by the Board or Committee as a stage in the consideration of the application, I will
- a) Follow the National Park Authority's procedures for such visits as set out by the National Park Authority and that with regard to any legislative requirements or notes of guidance or practice;
 - b) Remember that such site visits are part of the decision-making process and as such are formal in nature and may have procedures as set out by the National Park Authority.

Enforcement

- 7.12 In my role, I may become aware whether by complaint or by direct knowledge of the need for National Park Authority intervention by way of appropriate enforcement action. In this event, I will refer the matter for investigation to the appropriate service of the National Park Authority. I will also:
- a) Advise all subsequent enquirers to deal directly with the relevant employee of the National Park Authority;
 - b) Be able to request factual information about the progress of the matter from the relevant employee.
- I will not:
- c) Lobby for a particular outcome;
 - d) Get involved in the operational detail of any enforcement actions which are subsequently taken by the National Park Authority



Annex A: Breaches of the Code

Introduction

1. [The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2000](#) (“the Act”) provided for a framework to encourage and, where necessary, enforce high ethical standards in public life.
2. The Act provided for the introduction of new codes of conduct for local authority councillors and members of relevant public bodies, imposing on councils and relevant public bodies a duty to help their members comply with the relevant code.
3. The Act and the subsequent Scottish Parliamentary Commissions and Commissioners etc. Act 2010 established the Standards Commission for Scotland (“Standards Commission”) and the post of Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (“ESC”).
4. The Standards Commission and ESC are separate and independent, each with distinct functions. Complaints of breaches of a public body’s Code of Conduct are investigated by the ESC and adjudicated upon by the Standards Commission.
5. The first Model Code of Conduct came into force in 2002. The Code has since been reviewed and re-issued in 2014. The 2021 Code has been issued by the Scottish Ministers following consultation, and with the approval of the Scottish Parliament, as required by the Act.

Investigation of Complaints

6. The ESC is responsible for investigating complaints about members of devolved public bodies. It is not, however, mandatory to report a complaint about a potential breach of the Code to the ESC. It may be more appropriate in some circumstances for attempts to be made to resolve the matter informally at a local level.
7. On conclusion of the investigation, the ESC will send a report to the Standards Commission.



Hearings

8. On receipt of a report from the ESC, the Standards Commission can choose to:
 - Do nothing;
 - Direct the ESC to carry out further investigations; or
 - Hold a Hearing.

9. Hearings are held (usually in public) to determine whether the member concerned has breached their public body's Code of Conduct. The Hearing Panel comprises of three members of the Standards Commission. The ESC will present evidence and/or make submissions at the Hearing about the investigation and any conclusions as to whether the member has contravened the Code. The member is entitled to attend or be represented at the Hearing and can also present evidence and make submissions. Both parties can call witnesses. Once it has heard all the evidence and submissions, the Hearing Panel will make a determination about whether or not it is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that there has been a contravention of the Code by the member. If the Hearing Panel decides that a member has breached their public body's Code, it is obliged to impose a sanction.

Sanctions

10. The sanctions that can be imposed following a finding of a breach of the Code are as follows:
 - e) **Censure** - A censure is a formal record of the Standards Commission's severe and public disapproval of the member concerned.
 - f) **Suspension** - This can be a full or partial suspension (for up to one year). A full suspension means that the member is suspended from attending all meetings of the public body. Partial suspension means that the member is suspended from attending some of the meetings of the public body. The Commission can direct that any remuneration or allowance the member receives as a result of their membership of the public body be reduced or not paid during a period of suspension.
 - g) **Disqualification** - Disqualification means that the member is removed from membership of the body and disqualified (for a period not exceeding five years), from membership of the body. Where a member is also a member of another devolved public body (as defined in the Act), the Commission may



also remove or disqualify that person in respect of that membership. Full details of the sanctions are set out in section 19 of the Act.

Interim Suspensions

11. Section 21 of the Act provides the Standards Commission with the power to impose an interim suspension on a member on receipt of an interim report from the ESC about an ongoing investigation. In making a decision about whether or not to impose an interim suspension, a Panel comprising of three Members of the Standards Commission will review the interim report and any representations received from the member and will consider whether it is satisfied:
- h) That the further conduct of the ESC's investigation is likely to be prejudiced
 - i) if such an action is not taken (for example if there are concerns that the member may try to interfere with evidence or witnesses); or
 - j) That it is otherwise in the public interest to take such a measure. A policy outlining how the Standards Commission makes any decision under Section 21 and the procedures it will follow in doing so, should any such a report be received from the ESC can be found [here](#).
12. The decision to impose an interim suspension is not, and should not be seen as, a finding on the merits of any complaint or the validity of any allegations against a member of a devolved public body, nor should it be viewed as a disciplinary measure.



Annex B: Definitions

1. **"Bullying"** is inappropriate and unwelcome behaviour which is offensive and intimidating, and which makes an individual or group feel undermined, humiliated or insulted.
2. **"Chair"** includes Board Convener or any other individual discharging a similar function to that of a Chair or Convener under alternative decision-making structures.
3. **"Code"** is the code of conduct for members of your devolved public body, which is based on the Model Code of Conduct for members of devolved public bodies in Scotland.
4. **"Cohabitee"** includes any person who is living with you in a relationship similar to that of a partner, civil partner, or spouse.
5. **"Confidential Information"** includes:
 - k) any information passed on to the public body by a Government department (even if it is not clearly marked as confidential) which does not allow the disclosure of that information to the public;
 - l) information of which the law prohibits disclosure (under statute or by the order of a Court);
 - m) any legal advice provided to the public body; or
 - n) any other information which would reasonably be considered a breach of confidence should it be made public.
6. **"Election expenses"** means expenses incurred, whether before, during or after the election, on account of, or in respect of, the conduct or management of the election.
7. **"Employee"** includes individuals employed:
 - o) directly by the public body;
 - p) as contractors by the public body, or
 - q) by a contractor to work on the public body's premises.
8. **"Gifts"** a gift can include any item or service received free of charge, or which may be offered or promised at a discounted rate or on terms not available to the



general public. Gifts include benefits such as relief from indebtedness, loan concessions, or provision of property, services or facilities at a cost below that generally charged to members of the public. It can also include gifts received directly or gifts received by any company in which the recipient holds a controlling interest in, or by a partnership of which the recipient is a partner.

9. **“Harassment”** is any unwelcome behaviour or conduct which makes someone feel offended, humiliated, intimidated, frightened and / or uncomfortable. Harassment can be experienced directly or indirectly and can occur as an isolated incident or as a course of persistent behaviour.
10. **“Hospitality”** includes the offer or promise of food, drink, accommodation, entertainment or the opportunity to attend any cultural or sporting event on terms not available to the general public.
11. **“Relevant Date”** where a board member had an interest in shares at the date on which the member was appointed as a member, the relevant date is – (a) that date; and (b) the 5th April immediately following that date and in each succeeding year, where the interest is retained on that 5th April.
12. **“Public body”** means a devolved public body listed in Schedule 3 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, as amended.
13. **“Remuneration”** includes any salary, wage, share of profits, fee, other monetary benefit or benefit in kind.
14. **“Securities”** a security is a certificate or other financial instrument that has monetary value and can be traded. Securities includes equity and debt securities, such as stocks bonds and debentures.
15. **“Undertaking”** means:
 - a) a body corporate or partnership; or
 - b) an unincorporated association carrying on a trade or business, with or without a view to a profit.