

Ettington Parish Council

PROTOCOL ON MEMBERS' USE OF COUNCIL RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

Adopted on 14 March 2018

**To be reviewed annually or as required by
changes in legislation;**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Protocol is to clarify the requirement within the Members' Code of Conduct (see 1.4 below) and to provide guidance in the use of services and equipment provided by the Council during their term of office. The Protocol applies to all Members and Co-opted Members.
- 1.2 The Council provides facilities and resources (e.g. IT equipment) to assist Members in carrying out their duties as District Councillors. When they are not undertaking those duties, Members must not use council resources unless with written agreement from /in consultation with the Clerk to the Council.
- 1.3 The Council is prohibited from publishing any material of a political nature and Members should ensure that when using or authorising the use by others of the Council's facilities and resources, that such facilities and resources are not used for political purposes (unless specified in 2.1 below)
- 1.4 The Members' Code of Conduct states 'You must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority, ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) and you must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986'.
- 1.5 This Protocol should be read in conjunction with the Members' Code of Conduct, Part 6 of the Constitution (Members' Allowance Scheme) and the 'Information Technology for Councillors' Document.

2 Use of Facilities and Resources

2.1 Allowed:-

- Holding Ward surgeries;
- Dealing with correspondence from constituents;
- Communicating group activities;
- Meetings between group members.

2.2 Not allowed:-

- Designing, printing and/or distributing political material in support of any political party
- Designing, printing and/or distributing political material for elections and campaigning purposes

- 2.3 Non-compliance is likely to be breach the Members' Code of Conduct.

3 Publicity Code

- 3.1 The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity provides guidance on a number of aspects of local authority publicity, covering the content, distribution, advertising, cost, timing etc. of publicity. The Council is required by legislation to consider the Publicity Code in coming to any decision on publicity, which is defined as any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public or a section of the public. This is of particular relevance in the lead up to any election.

4 Election Publicity

- 4.1 Strict rules apply to communications and publicity during the election period (from notice of election to close of polls):
- Any Council publicity on controversial issues will not be published and any views or proposals will not be reported in such a way as to identify them with any individual Members or groups of Members;
 - Publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election will not be published, unless expressly authorised by or under statute.
- 4.2 Council decision-making will continue as usual and decisions will be publicised.
- 4.3 Information regarding election publicity is published before any major set of elections.

5 Information Technology and Mobile Phones (currently under review)

- 5.1 With regard to e-mails, a key point is that their contents can be legally binding and may be produced in court as evidence. You must make sure that any emails you send do not personally commit you or the Council to any action that has not been authorised.

6 Social Media

- 11.1 The use of social media tools by councillors represents an opportunity to engage with people who may not traditionally contact their local councillor. Councillors wishing to use social media should ensure they are familiar with the social media sites they wish to use. Members may seek external training if they identify this as a training need. The same principles for the use of council resources, such as computers and letterheads, also apply when using social media. Council resources should not be used to publish material that encourages or appears to encourage support for a particular political point of view.

- 6.2 It is important to recognise that all content published on social media is publicly available. Councillors are advised not to publish anything on social media that they would be unwilling to say face to face or to have published in the local newspaper. In particular councillors need to ensure that their use of social media as a councillor complies with the requirements of the Member's code of conduct.

7 Personalised Letterhead, Compliment Slips and Business Cards

- 7.1 The Ettington Parish Council name must not appear on notepaper which includes the logo of a political party or group. This could be interpreted that the group or party stance is that of the Council.

8 General

- 8.1 All equipment issued to elected Members remains the property of the Council and should be returned to the Council at the end of a Member's term of office.
- 8.2 Any complaint relating to an alleged breach of the Protocol should be made in writing to the Monitoring Officer.
- 8.3 A breach of the Protocol may also be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 8.4 If any Member is unsure about any aspect of the Protocol they should seek advice from the Clerk or the Monitoring Officer of Stratford District Council or his Deputies.

9 Advice on this protocol

- 9.1 are encouraged to seek advice from the **Clerk or the** Monitoring Officer **of Stratford District Council** if in doubt about the rules on use of resources.