

Hartlepool Board Code of Conduct

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1. Purpose

The Hartlepool Board is built on the dedication and professionalism of all board members who are expected to act appropriately when conducting any work associated with the Board, representing the Board or otherwise acting in their capacity as a board member.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the standards of conduct and accountability which are expected by all members of the Hartlepool Board. This applies to all members who are involved, whether or not they are voting representatives, and all members should comply with this Code of Conduct.

All board members agree to abide by this Code of Conduct and sign up to this on commencement of their membership to the Hartlepool Board.

2. Standards of Conduct

Members of the Hartlepool Board have a responsibility to make sure they are familiar with, and that their conduct meets the high standards that are expected by our residents and communities within Hartlepool.

As such, all members should understand and follow the Seven Principles of Public Life, otherwise known as the Nolan Principles:

- Selflessness – Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- Integrity – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- Objectivity – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- Accountability – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate for their role.
- Openness – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- Honesty – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

- Leadership – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles through effective leadership and being a role model so that public service values are maintained.

These principles are the basis for this Code of Conduct and set out the key behaviours expected from members of the Board.

3. Good Faith

All board members must act in a way which, in good faith, would be the most likely to benefit our residents and communities across the whole of Hartlepool alongside promoting the success of the Board.

Amongst other matters, within decision-making, members must have due regard to:

- The benefits and positive impact that any decision will have on residents and communities within Hartlepool.
- The need to foster the relationships members have with community groups, partners, and stakeholders.
- The need to maintain a reputation for high standards of conduct in all aspects of conduct in relation to the Board.

This approach will ensure that all members act with integrity and operate in the best interests of the Hartlepool Board.

4. Use of Information and Confidentiality

The Hartlepool Board will be open and transparent with all of the agendas and other papers relating to meetings usually being made publicly accessible through the Council website, once they have been approved for publication by the Chair.

There will be occasions when information, records of discussion and decisions will not be made publicly accessible, for example when sensitive or commercially confidential items are considered by the Board. Any excluded items will therefore be circulated in confidence to board members and will likely only be of a sensitive nature for a certain period of time such as information relating to a proposed capital development. The Board will decide how long items should remain confidential and such items will be regularly reviewed to consider if the information can be made available to the public.

It is important that the Board can have open discussions in order to make decisions collectively and, to achieve this, there must be trust between all board members. There is therefore an expectation that board members will not disclose any information which, by reason of its nature, has been decided to be confidential by the Chair or the Hartlepool Board.

Board Members should not make any statements to the public or media which relate to the proceedings of the Board without first receiving approval from the Chair. It is also unethical for board members to publicly criticise or reveal the views of other Board Members which have been expressed during meetings of the Board.

5. Compliance

All board members need to comply with this Code of Conduct and are individually responsible for raising concerns regarding any breach of this policy.

If Hartlepool Borough Council or the Chair becomes aware of a concern that a board member has acted in breach of this policy, a fact finding exercise will be undertaken to establish the validity. If there is evidence to substantiate the concern, the board member who is considered to be in breach will be invited to a one to one meeting to discuss the situation and resolutions with the Chair.

The objective will always be to informally resolve any concerns, but further action may need to be taken depending on the level of the breach and any formal decisions will be made at the next meeting of the Hartlepool Board.

6. Board Development

There is an expectation that board members will attend a series of development sessions that will shape the ethics and behaviours expected for the effective functioning of the Hartlepool Board. The development sessions will also share best practice in relation to Place Leadership and Governance.

These sessions will ensure that board members are fully aware of their responsibilities as members of the Board. Some of the topics will include:

- Civic Leadership and the Nolan Principle
- What is Hartlepool's 'WE' and what is your 'ME'?
- Who are you as a leader and how do we operate as leaders together\?
- Power Dynamics and Behaviours

The board development activities will be ongoing and designed in collaboration with members to enhance the effectiveness, governance, practices, and strategic focus of the Hartlepool Board.

7. Review

This Code of Conduct will be continuously reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose but will be formally reviewed on an annual basis by the Board.