PRIDE IN PLACE – CODE OF CONDUCT

The Neighbourhood Board for Penhill have agreed to adopt this code of conduct as of [18/08/2026] for all members of the Neighbourhood Board and all Pride in Place meetings, including Board and Committee meetings.

1. INTRODUCTION

- This code sets out the standards of conduct and accountability expected of Neighbourhood Board members and other individuals involved in the Pride in Place programme.
- This code should be read in conjunction with the Terms of Reference for the Neighbourhood Board and the associated information on conflicts of interest.
- This code is designed to assist the Board as a whole, and all associated groups, to function efficiently, and to understand what conduct is expected of individuals when they are operating as a member of the Board and its sub group, forums, task groups and any other meeting which takes place under the auspices of the Pride in Place programme.

This code has been developed in line with the Nolan Principles of Public Life outlined below and seeks to recognise that any Board is made up of a diverse set of individuals with varying interests, motivations, expectations and characters which sometimes conflict but are often similar.

The Board acknowledge the fundamental obligation that Board members have **to act in the best interests of the community served by the Pride in Place programme**, to which all Board members agree when they sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Responsibilities form when they become a Board member. The detailed matters listed below do not take away from that basic duty.

The Board agree that Neighbourhood Board members should abide by the seven principles of public life:

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 to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions 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 by leadership and example.

GOVERNANCE

This code should not be confused with the technical procedures for the operation of the Pride in Place programme covering areas such as eligibility for Board membership, quorum and other governance detail covered in the Terms of Reference for the Neighbourhood Board or the Accountable Body arrangements.

2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Individuals must not discriminate against people they come into contact with during their work with, or on behalf of, the Pride in Place programme on the basis of their race or ethnic origin, gender or gender reassignment process, marital status, pregnancy, sexuality, religion, disability or age.

All individuals will be expected to comply with Equal Opportunities legislation and the agreed Equal Opportunities policy of the Neighbourhood Board.

The Board values the diversity of experiences, backgrounds and perspectives that individuals bring and expects these differences to respected and welcomed.

In all the work of the Pride in Place programme this will be demonstrated by:

- not making **assumptions** about a person or group of people
- not making **judgements** about a person or a group of people
- not **discriminating** against any person or group of people on the basis of their race or ethnic origin, gender or gender reassignment process, marital status, pregnancy, sexuality, religion, disability or age.

3. BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

3.1 Behaviour During Meetings

The vast majority of work of the programme will be undertaken at meetings, small and large. The effectiveness of these meetings is critical because they will be:

- the principal decision making tool of the Neighbourhood Board; and
- the principal method of wider community and partner involvement

The behaviour of participants at a meeting is important to the success of the meeting. Many people lack the confidence to express themselves fully in a meeting with other people, whereas some find it easy to dominate. Effective meetings can be achieved if all individuals are committed to some simple ground rules for behaviour before and during meetings:

- individual Board members should always behave in a manner which does not bring the Board or Pride in Place into disrepute or damage the relationship that Swindon Borough Council has with its stakeholders. Board members should actively engage in discussion, debate and voting in meetings, contributing in a considered and constructive way, listening carefully, challenging constructively and managing disagreement respectfully;
- Board members are expected to approach discussions with curiosity, respect and a willingness to understand different perspectives before reaching conclusions;
- individuals have a responsibility to be properly prepared for meetings by reading the paperwork beforehand and by committing themselves to attending meetings as required;
- individual and personal disputes should not be allowed to affect conduct within the meeting but should be resolved elsewhere;
- all contributions should be addressed to the meeting via the Chair. Individuals wishing to speak should seek the attention of the Chair and wait their turn to speak, doing so when directed by the Chair;
- individuals should not have meetings within meetings by discussing issues with other individuals or groups of individuals when another person has been directed by the Chair to speak. All comments and queries should be directed to the whole meeting via the Chair;
- individuals should respect the contributions of others by not interrupting when someone is speaking even when you may not agree with what they are saying;
- in contributing to the meeting individuals should ensure that comments they make do not amount to a personal attack on another individual and should avoid using heated, emotional and value loaded language and behaviour;
- individuals should be constantly aware in their remarks of their equal opportunities responsibilities and avoiding potentially offensive language and comments;
- individuals should above all remember that Pride in Place work means not always getting the decision **you** want and accepting the responsibility of abiding by majority decisions.

It is very important that decisions taken in meetings are well informed by having appropriate, accurate information and debate on the topics concerned. The wider community and government must be able to feel that decisions, particularly those affecting the spending of public funds, are fair and have not been influenced by the vested interests of those making these decisions or based on misinformation. For this reason one of the most important areas of appropriate behaviour during meetings, in addition to the above, relates to declarations of interest.

Declarations of Interest

At the beginning of a meeting the Chair will ask individuals in attendance to declare whether they have any personal, financial or other material interest in any item on the agenda. (More

detailed information about what kinds of areas may constitute a Conflict of Interest and need to be declared is covered in a separate section below.) The Chair and the remaining voting members of the meeting will then decide whether individuals declaring an interest must leave the meeting for the relevant item or just not take part in the discussion or decision making.

3.2 Outside Meetings

It is just as important that individuals conduct themselves appropriately outside official meetings since they will be seen as representatives of Pride in Place and the Neighbourhood Board in a number of other circumstances including non Pride in Place meetings. Some of the issues to consider are outlined below.

Acting within the law and any guidance

Board members embody honesty, accountability, and social responsibility by adhering to the law and the adopted policies in all their actions. This ensures that the Board's work is transparent and fair, and that Board members act as role models for ethical conduct.

Expenses

Board members should embody stewardship, accountability, and concern for community by using the Pride in Place resources efficiently and ethically. They should ensure that any assets are managed for the long-term benefit of the wider community. When incurring expenses, a Board member should consider not only the immediate need but also the broader impact on the Board's sustainability and reputation. Board members should only claim expenses to which they are legitimately entitled and where there is proof of expense having been incurred.

Confidentiality

Pride in Place meetings may receive information which is not in the public domain relating to individuals, organisations or financial matters. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that this information remains confidential to the meeting unless prior authorisations has been given by the Chair for this to be discussed elsewhere. Individuals must never use confidential information for their personal advantage or the advantage or disadvantage of anyone known to them or to disadvantage or discredit Pride in Place.

Digital behaviour and social media

Board members are expected to uphold the same high standards of conduct in all digital communications as they do in person. This includes email, social media, online meetings and messaging platforms (such as Google Chat, WhatsApp or similar) connected in any way to their role on the Neighbourhood Board. This also includes any private, closed or invitation only groups. All such communication, whether public, semi-public or private, should be conducted in accordance with the principles of this Code, reflecting respect and integrity.

Board members must comply with any digital communications guidelines and refrain from any online behaviour that could bring the programme, the Board or Swindon Borough Council into disrepute or undermine any agreed set of values.

Responsible digital conduct reflects the values of openness, accountability, and social responsibility. By communicating thoughtfully and respectfully online, Board members help to protect the programme's reputation and foster trust in all forums.

Collective responsibility

Individuals will inevitably have differences of opinion on issues debated at meetings. After full discussion when the meeting has reached a conclusion all individuals must uphold this decision whether they voted for it or against it. Board members are expected to support and respect decisions once they have been made (particularly in public and on social media), while continuing to raise concerns through the Board's agreed governance processes where appropriate.

Criminal convictions

Board members must promptly notify the Independent Chair if they are convicted of an arrestable offence (excluding minor traffic offences). The Conduct Committee will consider the implications of such convictions for the Council Member's continued service, in line with best practice and the need to protect the integrity and reputation of the Society

Communications with other agencies

There will be occasions when individuals will be asked to, or wish to, communicate with external agencies e.g. the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Swindon Borough Council, members of the press etc. In order to ensure they are fully apprised of the latest information and that communications are consistent throughout the organisation this should only be done following discussion with the Independent Chair to ensure communications are accurate, consistent, and appropriately coordinated.

Hospitality and Gifts

Individuals must declare any gifts or hospitality they are offered in connection with their role to the Independent Chair. Anything which could be construed as a means of influencing the way in which decisions of the Neighbourhood Board are made should be refused. Advice should be sought from the Chair if in doubt before accepting.

Public Office

Under the Terms of Reference for the Neighbourhood Board, Board members who are standing in elections for public office must suspend their involvement with the Neighbourhood Board during the campaign until the results of the election are known. This means Board members must not:

- participate in any Board, Committee or Working Group meeting;
- take part in any public meeting on behalf of Pride in Place;
- seek to commit the Council or any body receiving funding to any obligation;
- make use of any property (including confidential information) for election purposes; or
- hold themselves out publicly as a Neighbourhood Board member.

Board members who are aware that they will be in this position in relation to a particular election campaign must make the Independent Chair aware of the fact as soon as reasonably possible and in any event before the campaign begins.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Some issues of behaviour and conduct relate to a lack of understanding of the various roles and responsibilities of the different individuals and groupings within which the Pride in Place programme operates.

Staff

Staff working on the Pride in Place initiative will each have their respective line management arrangements and be supervised in their role as appropriate. It is not the role of Neighbourhood Board members or others to act as managers of the staff team nor to give direct instructions to members of staff. Any requests or issues relating to the work of other staff members should always be directed to the Independent Chair for action.

Independent Chair

This is a key role within the structure and this person plays an important part in the management of meetings and the conduct of individuals representing Pride in Place. Their responsibilities in relation to conduct include:

- keeping order and making sure that the agreed rules of conduct are followed;
- minimising any sense of confusion and frustration by ensuring that the agenda is properly covered, that jargon is not used or is explained and that individuals understand the debate and what decisions are required and why;
- making sure that everyone who wants to contribute is encouraged to do;
- summarising the decisions taken and the action points which arise from this; and
- acting as an independent referee when required.

The Neighbourhood Board

The Board's function is to decide the strategy, policies and overall direction of the Pride in Place programme in the neighbourhood within the budget, legal and statutory framework and other relevant government funding criteria set for the operation of the programme. The Board is also accountable for matters affecting compliance with terms on which the Government has made funds available. Swindon Borough Council has specific responsibilities on this but the Neighbourhood Board shares overall responsibility for maximising the benefit derived from the use of such funding.

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is a requirement of MHCLG that there is a formal written procedure for the avoidance of conflicts of interest which is contained in the Terms of Reference of the Neighbourhood Board. This covers Board members and their partners, together with connected persons including members of the same household. This applies in particular to decision-making as it relates to approval of any spending decisions and, to the extent that it is within the Neighbourhood Board's remit, the letting of contracts.

It is acknowledged that all those involved in a Neighbourhood Board will, due to its nature, have an interest of some sort. Such interests must not be allowed to result in actual or perceived undue benefit or conflict, and consequently to unsound decision making.

Where a conflict of interest exists or potentially exists a declaration of interest should be made to the Chair of the appropriate meeting as outlined above in Section 3. The types of conflict include:

- where an individual or a connected person stands to benefit from a decision. For these purposes a "connected person" means any spouse, civil partner, cohabitee, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild of a Board member, any firm of which a Board member is a member or employee or a company of which a Board member is a director, employee or shareholder being beneficially entitled to more than 1 per cent of the share capital. Any interest of the individual or a connected person would be covered by this **Personal Interest** category. For example, where a project approval or decision on the letting of a contract would benefit an individual (or a connected person) directly. In this situation the individual concerned must leave the meeting whilst the item is discussed;

- many individuals wear more than one hat i.e. some residents in decision making positions will be also employees of potential beneficiaries and some Board members may be employees of partner organisations bidding for funds or contracts etc. In these situations such an individual will have a **Non-Personal Interest** which must still be declared. The individual and the Board will then both need to take a view as to whether the conflict is so significant as to require withdrawal.

This can seem a confusing area for those not used to operating within these types of guidelines and if in doubt as to whether a potential conflict of interest exists this should be clarified with the Independent Chair either before or during the relevant meeting. Further guidance on this can be provided by the Accountable Body or MHCLG.

6. BREACHES OF THE CODE

It is always preferable for breaches of the code to be dealt with in a timely manner.

Where this occurs during a meeting:

- participants should raise breaches of the code as a point of order through the Chair;
- if the Chair agrees that a breach has taken place, a first informal or verbal warning will be issued to the person concerned. This will be noted in the minutes;
- if an individual breaches the code for a second time they will be asked to leave the meeting. This will be noted in the minutes, explaining briefly the reasons for exclusion from the meeting;
- following exclusion from a meeting the Chair will arrange a meeting of a small sub-committee from the Neighbourhood Board ("the Conduct Committee") to discuss the breach. The Conduct Committee will meet within 14 working days of the original meeting;
- the Conduct Committee will decide whether it is appropriate for the individual to attend any meetings or functions during this review period depending on the nature of the complaint;
- a copy of the complaint will be sent to the individual 7 days before the review meeting;
- the Conduct Committee will allow the individual to attend the meeting and to speak in reply to the complaint;
- if there is any dispute about the facts the Conduct Committee may call for evidence and reconvene at a later date but within a further 14 days;
- if it is agreed that the code has been breached then the Conduct Committee will reach a decision acting reasonably as to the appropriate sanction, which may include:
    - a written or verbal warning;

- additional training or guidance;
- an apology;
- suspension for a fixed period of time as a Board member; or
- removal from the Neighbourhood Board.

If it is decided that permanent removal from the Neighbourhood Board is warranted, then a report will be taken to the next full meeting of the Board for the Board to note. There is a right of appeal to the Board from decisions of the Conduct Committee. In extreme cases the Accountable Body and / or MHCLG may become involved if such disputes threaten to affect the delivery of the programme.

Where the breach of code takes place outside a meeting then complaints must, in the first instance, be made in writing to the Independent Chair. The Chair will then decide whether to convene a meeting of the Conduct Committee to investigate as outlined above.