

1 PURPOSE

This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour expected of the aldermen of the Burnie City Council, with respect to all aspects of their role.

As leaders in the community, aldermen acknowledge the importance of high standards of behaviour in maintaining good governance. Good governance supports each alderman's primary goal of acting in the best interests of the community.

Aldermen therefore agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the standards of behaviour set out in the Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct incorporates the Model Code of Conduct made by Order of the Minister responsible for local government.

2 SCOPE

This Code of Conduct applies to an alderman whenever he or she:

- conducts council business, whether at or outside a meeting;
- conducts the business of his or her office (which may be that of mayor, deputy mayor or alderman); or
- acts as a representative of the Council.

A complaint of failure to comply with the provisions of the Code of Conduct may be made where the alderman fails to meet the standard of conduct specified in the Model Code of Conduct.

3 POLICY

3.1 Standards of Conduct Prescribed under the Model Code of Conduct

The model code of conduct provides for the following eight standards of conduct:

Decision making

An alderman is to bring an open and unprejudiced mind to all matters being considered in the course of his or her duties, so that decisions are made in the best interests of the community.

Conflict of interest

An alderman effectively manages conflict of interest by ensuring that personal or private interests do not influence, and are not seen to influence, the performance of his or her role and acting in the public interest.

Use of office

An alderman uses his or her office solely to represent and serve the community, conducting himself or herself in a way that maintains the community's trust in the alderman and the Council as a whole.

Use of resources

An alderman uses Council resources and assets strictly for the purpose of performing his or her role.

Use of information

An alderman uses information appropriately to assist in performing his or her role in the best interests of the community.

Gifts and benefits

An alderman adheres to the highest standards of transparency and accountability in relation to the receiving of gifts or benefits, and carries out his or her duties without being influenced by personal gifts or benefits.

Relationships with community, aldermen and council employees

An alderman is to be respectful in his or her conduct, communication and relationships with members of the community, fellow aldermen and Council employees in a way that builds trust and confidence in the Council.

Representation

An alderman is to represent himself or herself and the Council appropriately and within the ambit of his or her role, and clearly distinguish between his or her views as an individual and those of the Council.

*A copy of the **full Code of Conduct** is attached to this policy.*

3.2 Principles of Good Governance

By adopting this Code of Conduct, aldermen commit to the overarching principles of good governance by being:

Accountable – Explain, and be answerable for, the consequences of decisions made on behalf of the community.

Transparent – Ensure decision making processes can be clearly followed and understood by the community.

Law-abiding – Ensure decisions are consistent with relevant legislation or common law, and within the powers of local government.

Responsive – Represent and serve the needs of the entire community while balancing competing interests in a timely, appropriate and responsive manner.

Equitable – Provide all groups with the opportunity to participate in the decision making process and treat all groups equally.

Participatory and inclusive – Ensure that anyone affected by or interested in a decision has the opportunity to participate in the process for making that decision.

Effective and efficient – Implement decisions and follow processes that make the best use of the available people, resources and time, to ensure the best possible results for the community.

Consensus oriented – Take into account the different views and interests in the community, to reach a majority position on what is in the best interests of the whole community, and how it can be achieved.

3.3 Code of Conduct

The code of conduct framework is legislated under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Tasmanian councillors are required to comply with the provisions of the Council's Code of Conduct while performing the functions and exercising the powers of his or her office with the council.

3.4 Making a Code of Conduct Complaint

A person may make a code of conduct complaint against one alderman in relation to the contravention by the alderman of the relevant council's code of conduct.

A person may make a complaint against more than one alderman if the complaint relates to the same behaviour and the same code of conduct contravention.

Code of conduct complaints are lodged with the general manager of the relevant council and must comply with legislative requirements, as outlined below.

A complaint may not be made by more than two complainants jointly.

A code of conduct complaint is to –

- be in writing;
- state the name and address of the complainant;
- state the name of each alderman against whom the complaint is made;
- state the provisions of the relevant code of conduct that the alderman has allegedly contravened;
- contain details of the behaviour of each alderman that constitutes the alleged contravention;
- be lodged with the general manager within six months after the alderman or aldermen against whom the complaint is made allegedly committed the contravention of the code of conduct; and
- be accompanied by the code of conduct complaint lodgement fee.

Once satisfied that the code of conduct complaint meets prescribed requirements, the General Manager forwards the complaint to the Code of Conduct Panel.

A Flowchart is attached to this policy that shows the steps to be taken in assessment, investigation, determination and possible sanctions of a complaint.

3.5 Code of conduct complaint lodgement fee

The code of conduct complaint lodgement fee is prescribed under Schedule 3 (Fees) of the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015*. The lodgement fee is 50 fee units and is included in Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges, (forms part of the Annual Plan and Budget Estimate book and available on council's website www.burnie.net).

3.6 Aldermen Dispute Resolution

Aldermen commit to developing strong and positive working relationships and working effectively together at all times.

Prior to commencing a formal code of conduct complaint, the aldermen who are parties to any disagreement should endeavour to resolve their differences in a courteous and respectful manner, recognising that they have been elected to act in the best interests of the community.

An alderman who is party to any disagreement should request the Mayor or the General Manager to assist that alderman in resolving the disagreement informally.

If the informal assistance does not resolve the disagreement, the General Manager may, with the consent of the parties involved, choose to appoint an external mediator to assist in the resolution of the disagreement. If an external mediator is appointed, aldermen who are party to the disagreement must strive to cooperate with the mediator and use their best endeavours to assist the mediator and participate in the mediation arranged.

Where a matter cannot be resolved through internal processes, the next step may be to lodge a formal code of conduct complaint.

Aldermen should only invoke the provisions of the Code of Conduct in good faith, where it is perceived that another alderman has not complied with the provisions or intent of the Code of Conduct.

3.7 Complaints under the *Local Government Act 1993*

The Director of Local Government is responsible for the investigation of complaints regarding alleged breaches of the *Act*.

Any person can make a complaint to the Director, via the Local Government Division (contact details below), in accordance with section 339E of the *Act*, where it is genuinely believed that a council, alderman or general manager may have committed an offence under the *Act* or failed to comply with the requirements of the *Act*.

To make a complaint, it is recommended that you first contact the Local Government Division to discuss whether the matter is something that the Division can assist with.

3.8 Public Interest Disclosure

Any instances of suspected corrupt conduct, maladministration and serious and substantial waste of public resources or substantial risk to public health or safety or to the environment should be reported in accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002*. Disclosures may be made to the Tasmanian Ombudsman or the Tasmanian Integrity Commission.

4 LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 1993
Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002

5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Model Code of Conduct (by Ministerial Order: Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2016). The Model Code of Conduct as adopted by Council on 17 May 2016 (Item AO117-16) is to be included as an attachment to this policy.

Code of Conduct Flowchart. This flowchart is to be included as an attachment to this policy.

Code of Conduct Complaint Form FO-CBS-SG-011
Receipt of Gifts and Benefits Policy CP-CBS-SG-028
Aldermen's Declaration of Interest Form FO-CBS-SG-010

6 OTHER REFERENCES

Department of Premier and Cabinet's Local Government Division

Email: lgd@dpac.tas.gov.au

Web: www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government

Policy Endorsement	
Responsibility:	It is the responsibility of the Executive Manager Corporate Governance to review this policy and ensure compliance with the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> . It is the responsibility of the Governance Unit to maintain this policy within the Corporate Document Framework.
Minute Reference:	Item AO117-16
Council Meeting Date:	17 May 2016
Strategic Plan Reference:	Strategy 7.7.3 Provide support to elected members to assist them to fulfil their roles effectively.
Previous Policies Replaced:	This policy replaces the previous policy <i>Code of Conduct</i> version 3.0 dated 21 August 2012 (Item Number AO181/12, 21 August 2012).
Date of Commencement:	18 May 2016
Publication of policy:	Members of the public may inspect this policy at the City Offices, or access it on Council's website (www.burnie.net)

ATTACHMENT 1

Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2016
Schedule 1 – Model Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT

PART 1 - Decision making

- 1) A councillor must bring an open and unprejudiced mind to all matters being decided upon in the course of his or her duties, including when making planning decisions as part of the Council's role as a Planning Authority.
- 2) A councillor must make decisions free from personal bias or prejudice.
- 3) In making decisions, a councillor must give genuine and impartial consideration to all relevant information known to him or her, or of which he or she should have reasonably been aware.
- 4) A councillor must make decisions solely on merit and must not take irrelevant matters or circumstances into account when making decisions.

PART 2 - Conflict of interest

- 1) When carrying out his or her public duty, a councillor must not be unduly influenced, nor be seen to be unduly influenced, by personal or private interests that he or she may have.
- 2) A councillor must act openly and honestly in the public interest.
- 3) A councillor must uphold the principles of transparency and honesty and declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest at any meeting of the Council and at any workshop or any meeting of a body to which the councillor is appointed or nominated by the Council.
- 4) A councillor must act in good faith and exercise reasonable judgement to determine whether he or she has an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.
- 5) A councillor must avoid, and remove himself or herself from, positions of conflict of interest as far as reasonably possible.
- 6) A councillor who has an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest in a matter before the Council must –
 - a) declare the conflict of interest before discussion on the matter begins; and
 - b) act in good faith and exercise reasonable judgement to determine whether the conflict of interest is so material that it requires removing himself or herself physically from any Council discussion and remaining out of the room until the matter is decided by the Council.

PART 3 - Use of Office

- 1) The actions of a councillor must not bring the Council or the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 2) A councillor must not take advantage, or seek to take advantage, of his or her office or status to improperly influence others in order to gain an undue, improper, unauthorised or unfair benefit or detriment for himself or herself or any other person or body.
- 3) In his or her personal dealings with the Council (for example as a ratepayer, recipient of a Council service or planning applicant), a councillor must not expect nor request, expressly or implicitly, preferential treatment for himself or herself or any other person or body.

PART 4 - Use of resources

- 1) A councillor must use Council resources appropriately in the course of his or her public duties.
- 2) A councillor must not use Council resources for private purposes except as provided by Council policies and procedures.
- 3) A councillor must not allow the misuse of Council resources by any other person or body.
- 4) A councillor must avoid any action or situation which may lead to a reasonable perception that Council resources are being misused by the councillor or any other person or body.

PART 5 - Use of information

- 1) A councillor must protect confidential Council information in his or her possession or knowledge, and only release it if he or she has the authority to do so.
- 2) A councillor must only access Council information needed to perform his or her role and not for personal reasons or non-official purposes.
- 3) A councillor must not use Council information for personal reasons or non-official purposes.
- 4) A councillor must only release Council information in accordance with established Council policies and procedures and in compliance with relevant legislation.

PART 6 - Gifts and benefits

- 1) A councillor may accept an offer of a gift or benefit if it directly relates to the carrying out of the councillor's public duties and is appropriate in the circumstances.

- 2) A councillor must avoid situations in which the appearance may be created that any person or body, through the provisions of gifts or benefits of any kind, is securing (or attempting to secure) influence or a favour from the councillor or the Council.
- 3) A councillor must carefully consider –
 - a) the apparent intent of the giver of the gift or benefit; and
 - b) the relationship the councillor has with the giver; and
 - c) whether the giver is seeking to influence his or her decisions or actions, or seeking a favour in return for the gift or benefit.
- 4) A councillor must not solicit gifts or benefits in the carrying out of his or her duties.
- 5) A councillor must not accept an offer of cash, cash-like gifts (such as gift cards and vouchers) or credit.
- 6) A councillor must not accept a gift or benefit if the giver is involved in a matter which is before the Council.
- 7) A councillor may accept an offer of a gift or benefit that is token in nature (valued at less than \$50) or meets the definition of a token gift or benefit (if the Council has a gifts and benefits policy).
- 8) If the Council has a gifts register, a councillor who accepts a gift or benefit must record it in the relevant register.

PART 7 - Relationships with community, councillors and Council employees

- 1) A councillor –
 - a) must treat all persons with courtesy, fairness, dignity and respect; and
 - b) must not cause any reasonable person offence or embarrassment; and
 - c) must not bully or harass any person.
- 2) A councillor must listen to, and respect, the views of other councillors in Council and committee meetings and any other proceedings of the Council, and endeavour to ensure that issues, not personalities, are the focus of debate.
- 3) A councillor must not influence, or attempt to influence, any Council employee or delegate of the Council, in the exercise of the functions of the employee or delegate.
- 4) A councillor must not contact or issue instructions to any of the Council's contractors or tenderers, without appropriate authorisation.
- 5) A councillor must not contact an employee of the Council in relation to Council matters unless authorised by the General Manager of the Council.

PART 8 - Representation

- 1) When giving information to the community, a councillor must accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council.
- 2) A councillor must not knowingly misrepresent information that he or she has obtained in the course of his or her duties.
- 3) A councillor must not speak on behalf of the Council unless specifically authorised or delegated by the Mayor or Lord Mayor.
- 4) A councillor must clearly indicate when he or she is putting forward his or her personal views.
- 5) A councillor's personal views must not be expressed in such a way as to undermine the decisions of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute.
- 6) A councillor must show respect when expressing personal views publicly.
- 7) The personal conduct of a councillor must not reflect, or have the potential to reflect, adversely on the reputation of the Council.
- 8) When representing the Council on external bodies, a councillor must strive to understand the basis of the appointment and be aware of the ethical and legal responsibilities attached to such an appointment.

PART 9 - Variation of Code of Conduct

- 1) Any variation of this model code of conduct is to be in accordance with section 28T of the Act.

ATTACHMENT 2 - FLOWCHART

Local Government Code of Conduct Framework under the *Local Government Act 1993* – Flowchart

All councils adopt Model Code of Conduct for councillors made by Ministerial Order (with or without permitted variations) [s.28T]

Councils are encouraged to adopt a councillor complaint resolution policy to promote informal resolution of disputes between councillors

Minister appoints pool of Code of Conduct Panel Members [s.28K]

Executive Officer constitutes Code of Conduct Panel (in the investigation/determination of complaint) by selecting 3 members from the Minister's pool (2 experienced in local government and 1 lawyer) [s.28L]

Executive Officer appointed by Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet to undertake the administrative functions of the Panel [s.28M]

