Alva Community Council

Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Communication

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS | | |
| 1. | **Introduction** | The Code of Conduct for Alva Community Councillors is based largely on the Code of Conduct for local authority councillors and relevant public bodies as provided for in The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000.  The rules of good conduct must be observed in all situations where you act as a Community Councillor, including representing the Community Council on official business.  You must respect the Chair, your fellow Community Councillors and any members of the public present during meetings of Alva Community Council, its Committees or Sub-Committees or of any other organisations where you have been appointed by, and represent Alva Community Council. You must comply with rulings from the Chair in the conduct of the business of these meetings.  The responsibilities of Community Councillors to adhere to this Code of Conduct are also set out in Alva Community Council’s Standing Orders through which any breaches may be addressed. |
| 2. | **Principles** | Alva Community Councillors, as elected representatives of the Alva community, have a responsibility to make sure that they are familiar with, and that their actions comply with, the principles set out in this Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct and its principles, shall apply to all Alva Community Councillors and those representing Alva Community Council. These principles are as follows:   * Service to the Community (Public Service) * Selflessness * Integrity * Objectivity * Accountability and Stewardship * Openness * Honesty * Leadership * Respect |
| 3. | **Service to the Community** | As a Community Councillor you have a duty to act in the interests of the local community, which you have been elected or nominated to represent. You also have a duty to act in accordance with the remit of the Councils Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils, as set out by your local authority under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.  You have a duty to ascertain and reflect, through the Community Council, the views of the community as a whole, on any issue, irrespective of personal opinion.  You should ensure that you are, within reason, accessible to the Alva community and Alva residents. Various mechanisms to allow the general community to express their views, i.e. suggestion boxes, community surveys, opinion polls should, where possible, be made available. |
| 4. | **Selflessness** | You have a duty to take decisions solely in terms of the interest of the Alva community. You must not use your position as a Community Councillor to gain financial, material, political or other personal benefit for yourself, family or friends. |
| 5. | **Integrity** | You must not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to any individual or organisation that might reasonably be thought to influence you in your representation of the Alva community. If you have any private and/or personal interest in a matter to be considered by the Community Council, you have a duty to declare this and if deemed necessary by other members, withdraw from discussions and the decision making process with regard to that matter.  You should not accept gifts or hospitality that may be seen to influence or be intended to influence your opinion or judgement. The offer and/or receipt of any gifts, regardless of form, should always be reported to and noted by the Secretary of the Community Council. |
| 6. | **Objectivity** | In all your decisions and opinions as a Community Councillor, you must endeavour to represent the overall views of the Alva community, taking account of information which is provided to you or is publicly available, assessing its merit and gathering information as appropriate.  You may be appointed or nominated by Alva Community Council to serve as a member of another representative body. You should ensure that this Code of Conduct is observed when carrying out the duties of the other body.  You are free to have political and/or religious affiliations; however you must ensure that you represent the interests of the Alva community and Alva Community Council and not the interests of a particular political party or other group. |
| 7. | **Accountability and Stewardship** | You are accountable for the decisions and actions that you take on behalf of the Alva community through the Community Council. You must ensure that the Community Council uses its resources prudently and in accordance with the law.  Community Councillors will individually and collectively ensure that the business of Alva Community Council is conducted according to the Council’s Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils.  Community Councillors will individually and collectively ensure that annual accounts are produced showing the financial undertakings of the Community Council as set out in the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils. They must also ensure that all resources are used efficiently, effectively and fairly and are used strictly for the purposes of Community Council business and for no other purpose.  Minutes of Meetings recording all actions and decisions made should be produced and circulated to all members of the Community Council as soon as possible after each meeting.  Any breach of the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils as set out by your local authority under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 may be reported to your local authority to determine what action, if necessary, should be taken. |
| 8. | **Openness** | You have a duty to be open about your decisions, actions and representations, giving reasons for these where appropriate. You should be able to justify your decisions and be confident that you have not been unduly influenced by the views and/or opinions of others.  If you have dealings with the Media, members of the public, or others not directly involved in your Community Council, you should ensure that an explicit distinction is made between the expression of your personal views and opinions from any views or statement made about or on behalf of the Community Council. There is further guidance on this in Alva Community Council’s Guidelines for Communication, appended to this Code of Conduct. |
| 9. | **Honesty** | You have a duty to act honestly. You also have an obligation to work within the law at all times. You must declare any private interest relating to your Community Council duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the interests of the community and the Community Council. |
| 10. | **Leadership** | You have a duty to promote and support the principles of this Code of Conduct by leadership and example, to maintain and strengthen the community’s trust and confidence in the integrity of the Community Council and its members in representing the views and needs of the local area. You must also promote social inclusion and challenge discrimination in any form.  You should act to assist the Community Council, as far as possible, in the interest of the whole Alva community. Where particular interest groups’ concerns are in conflict with those of other groups or other areas you should help to ensure that the Community Council is aware of them. |
| 11. | **Respect** | You must treat fellow members of Alva Community Council and those that you represent with respect, with courtesy and in a non-discriminatory manner at all times both in person and in all communication. This should extend to any person, regardless of their position, you have dealings with in your capacity as a Community Councillor. There is further guidance on this in Alva Community Council’s Guidelines for Communication, appended to this Code of Conduct.  Recognition should be given to the contribution of everyone participating in the work of the Community Council. You must comply with Equal Opportunities legislation and ensure that equality of opportunity be given to every participant to have their knowledge, opinion, skill and experience taken into account.  You should ensure that confidential material, including details about individuals, is treated as such and that it is handled with dignity and discretion and is not used for personal, malicious or corrupt purposes. |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Alva Community Council

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Guidelines for Communication | | |
| 1. | Introduction | To make it quick and easy for Community Councillors and volunteers to organise meetings and events, and to help the Community Council deal with business which promotes the best interests of the Alva Community, Alva Community Council encourages two-way communication in-between meetings.  Digital communication is an easy and time-efficient way for community councillors and volunteers with busy lives to communicate. However, standards of digital communication in the public realm exemplify the drawbacks of getting people’s attention when, unlike the Community Council, correspondents do not need to maintain a working relationship.  Communication should be a means to a Community Council end and not an end in itself. In order to minimise unnecessary intrusion and burden on community councillors, Alva Community Council recommends common standards by which everyone can work.  The process for gathering and exchanging views at meetings is set out in Standing Orders. These guidelines cover the approach for Community Council business outwith meetings. They aim to provide the ‘golden rules’ for community councillors and volunteers, to ensure that the content of communication allows for a range of informed views to be expressed, makes best use of everyone’s time and progresses priority Community Council business. |
| 2. | Who should read these guidelines | These guidelines are for all Community Councillors and for volunteers who the Community Council has agreed are acting on behalf of the Community Council. |
| 3. | Where they apply | Alva Community Council is open to traditional and digital forms of communication which help progress priority Community Council business. These guidelines apply to all forms of communication, in particular:   * Email * Text messages * Social Media |
| 4. | Guidelines | As a general rule, think carefully before you send any digital communication.  Does your message:   1. Refer clearly to the action or decision from a recent Community Council meeting it helps progress? 2. Express your thoughts on the matter in hand clearly and in a way that opens the communication up to the views of others? 3. Show you have considered whether or not the matter is a priority to other community councillors not just yourself?   **Practising Constructive Communication:**  Whilst Alva Community Council depends on having a breadth of community perspective and on the willingness of people with opposing views to articulate them, you should bear in mind that digital communication has an amplifying effect on strong views and on the strength of terms in which they are expressed.  As a general rule, your digital communication should reflect how you would communicate at a Community Council meeting.  Look at communication from the recipient/s’ point of view:   1. Have you framed any differing views in constructive terms? 2. Is the tone in which you have expressed your views in keeping with the tone of Community Council meetings? 3. Will others see your communication as a contribution to or a distraction from Community Council business? 4. Is what you’ve said sensitive to its potential impact on the recipient/s   **Sensitivity**  You are also asked to consider the privacy of fellow community councillors before sending out communication. Community Council business does not require you to include any personal views or information about the recipient/s. |
| 5. | Communicating with the wider community | Community councils need the trust of the community they represent and community councillors should not inadvertently damage their community council’s reputation by   * presenting their own personal views for Community Council views * sending out inaccurate or unauthorised information * using the Community Council name for personal advantage   To help distinguish between the personal views of community councillors and those of the Community Council, Alva Community Council will not link personal blogs/ web pages / facebook to Alva Community Council’s website / facebook.  It is also worth bearing in mind that when expressing your own opinions, even if you don't mention Alva Community Council, people who know you as a community councillor could mistakenly interpret your comments as the Community Council stance.  Look carefully at the content of any personal communication for any references to Alva Community Council.   1. Will people think you are speaking with ‘your Community Council hat’ on? 2. Will people be clear on the difference between your own views and official Community Council communication? 3. Will people see the expression of a conflicting view as useful information or will it undermine the Community Council in the eyes of the public? |
| 6. | Self-regulation | Alva Community Council is an autonomous organisation made up of people who give up their time in the interests of their community.  It is accountable to the community it represents. It has no governing body to enforce rules or impose sanctions.  Alva Community Council trusts its members to take responsibility for setting and maintaining standards of communication which helps progress priority Community Council business without adding to the already substantial administrative burden. |

Date: 11/06/2018