



## **DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL** **CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **1. Introduction:**

**1.1** It is important that any Council member, whether elected, appointed or co-opted, understands the responsibilities of the role. This is to act on behalf of the Council, in good faith, for the benefit of the Commoners of Dartmoor.

### **2. The Council:**

**2.1** The Council composes a maximum of 20 elected members, 6 appointed members and a maximum of 2 co-opted members, as set out in the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985.

**2.2** Each member has one vote, except the Chair who also has the casting vote in the event of a tie in the voting (refer to the current adopted Standing Orders).

**2.3** The Council has corporate responsibility – all Council members are responsible for all the decisions made and actions taken, even where an individual may have voted against the decision. Matters not already in the public domain should not be openly discussed outside the Council meeting. Any financial or personal information relating to a commoner should be strictly confidential.

**2.4** The minutes are not a transcript of the meeting. They record only the key points relating to the item and the decision(s) made.

**2.5** All policy or grievance decisions of the Council are to be made at Council meetings. They cannot be made at sub committees or working group meetings unless the Council has given delegated powers to do so. A record should be kept (in the agreed template) of the discussion and a recommendation should be made for the Council to consider. The Council has given delegated powers to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary to take a decision between meetings, subject to reporting the outcome of any action taken to Council at the next meeting.

**2.6** If a Council member receives a written complaint from a commoner or anyone else, it should be passed on to the Secretary or Chairman for the next meeting of the Council to discuss if appropriate.

**2.7** No individual member can instruct the Secretary to undertake an action. The Secretary is responsible to the Council as a whole, through the Chair.

**2.8** At Council meetings, the authority of the chair must be observed and there should be no aggressive or argumentative behaviour. All points of view must be listened to, and the debate conducted politely.

### **3. Personal Standards:**

**3.1** All Council members must diligently adhere to the rules of the Council at all times. They must be truthful, honest and act appropriately and legally.

**3.2** All Council members must treat fellow Council members, Council employees, all commoners and members of the public with respect and a duty of care. They must not demonstrate any form of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation or in any other respect including existing or historical personal disputes.

**3.3** Council members should avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try to influence them. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, or for family or friends.

**3.4** As required by the Standing Orders, all conflicts of interest should be avoided or, if unavoidable, they must be declared, whether pecuniary or personal, including where and how that interest affects either themselves or a member of their family. The necessity to declare any interest is the responsibility of the member involved. It is not a declarable interest if it is held in common with all other Council members. Declarations of interest must be declared prior to the discussion (or agenda item) commencing and any declarations will be minuted. Refer to the guidance note on Declarations of Interest. [to be produced].

**3.5** If an interest has been declared a judgement must be made on whether this requires the Council member to withdraw from the debate and forfeit the right to vote. The Council member should be seen to act impartially at all times and be answerable in their actions to the wider commoners' community.

**3.6** Failure of any Council member to abide by these rules may result in the procedures for dealing with disorderly conduct, as set out in Standing Order 10, being implemented.

## **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**

Our Council Members and support staff have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. They should be able to carry out their duties and do their jobs without being physically, mentally or verbally abused and this behaviour will not be tolerated.

This Code of Conduct shall be reviewed after 12 months and thereafter every 4 years

Adopted by Dartmoor Commoners' Council  
31 July 2024