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| Meeting | Full Council |
| Date | 10 January 2024 |
| Report Title | Adoption of Code of Conduct |
| Author | Heather Rae, Head of Democratic Services |

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 06 December 2023, minute 52 refers. For the Town Council to adopt the Local Government Association's (LGA) Model Code of Conduct with one change to the wording to reference the 'Chief Executive' rather than the 'Clerk'. A copy of the recommended Code of Conduct is attached at **APPENDIX A**

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Councillors' conduct is an imperative part of the role, and key to public life. Conduct should be based on the principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

2.2 There have been various schemes and projects to address Councillor conduct and to promote civility and respect in Local Government which Council have support such as the 'Positive Conduct equals Positive Democracy Charter' and 'Civility and Respect Pledge'.

2.3 The current Code of Conduct was adopted in 2013, a copy is attached at **APPENDIX B** for information. Whilst the key points relating to the seven principles are included, it is outdated and no longer fit for purpose.

2.4 The Strategy and Resources Committee considered the LGA Model Code of Conduct to be fit for purpose for Chippenham Town Council.

3.0 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHIPPENHAM TOWN COUNCILLORS

3.1 The Head of Democratic Services has attended meetings and taken part in discussions relating to the model Code of Conduct which has been published by the Local Government Association and is included at **APPENDIX A**.

3.2 The key areas covered by the model Code of Conduct are:

- General principles of Councillor conduct
- Application of the Code
- General obligations under the Code in relation to respect, bullying, harassment, discrimination, impartiality of officers, confidentiality and access to information, disrepute, complying with the Code, interests and gifts and hospitality.
- Seven principles of public life
- Declaring interests

- 3.3 There is currently no inclusion of sanctions for breaches to the Code, but the model Code mentions that these are being considered by Government and any updates on sanctions or any other matter relating to the Code that may require a review will be reported back appropriately.
- 3.4 Any complaints made against a Councillor in relation to a breach of the Code are made to Wiltshire Council who manage this process.
- 3.5 Chippenham Town Council's Standing Orders (25) refer to Code of Conduct complaints, an extract is attached at **APPENDIX C** for information. There are no changes required if the model Code of Conduct is adopted.
- 3.6 There is one minor change to the model Code of Conduct that is suggested for clarity. The Code refers to the position of 'Clerk' for Town and Parish Councils, it is recommended that this be updated to reflect arrangements at Chippenham Town Council. The change would be from statement a) to statement b) below.
- a) Town and parish councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.*
- b) Town and parish councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Chief Executive, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.*
- 3.7 There was discussion between professional bodies at the Town and Parish level that further guidance, or a particular version could be drafted for Town and Parish Councils. This has not been completed and officers recommend proceeding with considering the model Code of Conduct for Chippenham Town Council.
- 3.8 Adopting the model Code would endorse the collaborative work carried out by the Local Government Association and provide alignment for Wiltshire Council's Monitoring Officer in the event of consideration of any breaches.
- 3.9 The Local Government Association has published a longer guidance document for Town and Parish Councils on the model Code of Conduct which includes more detailed examples and guidance available that Councillors, officers and members of the public may find useful. This is available on the Local Government Association's website: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/guidance-local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct#application-of-the-model-councillors-code-of-conduct>

4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The introduction of a new Code of Conduct will contribute to the following corporate priorities;
- Provide and develop facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive and promote health and well-being.
 - Play an active role in the future development of the town through collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and our community.
 - Help to create a future that is carbon neutral, environmentally sustainable and resilient to the impact of climate change.
 - Maintain and create opportunities to enhance our green spaces and provide a clean and safe environment.

- Provide and develop facilities and services that promote Chippenham as an attractive and vibrant market town and celebrate its rich history, heritage, and culture.
- Maintain effective and efficient governance and management of resources.

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no staffing implications.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications.

7.0 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This report is administrative and does not have any known direct Climate and Ecological impact.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Localism Act 2010 requires every Council to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council. In discharging that duty, a Council must adopt a Code of Conduct.

8.2 Upon the adoption of the Code of Conduct, it will apply to all current Councillors until they cease to be a Councillor.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Councillors adopt the attached Code of Conduct at **APPENDIX A**, which includes the change outlined at section 3.6 of the report to refer to the role of 'Chief Executive' rather than 'Clerk'.