

SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS



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INDEX

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Individual Councillors	2
3. Southwater Parish Council	2
4. Policy Statement	2

1. Introduction

- 1.1. A Council should not belong to any campaigning organisation. If the Council belongs to an action group, it signs up to the aims and objectives. How can the Council then respond to any challenge to someone disaffected by saying, that it has approached any decision making (where the organisations objectives could be directly or indirectly material) with an open mind and without bias?

2. Individual Councillors

- 2.1. Those individual Councillors who belong to a campaigning organisation must have regard to Paragraph 1 of the Code relating to the principles of good governance, all the more it they pay a lead role in a campaigning organisation.
- 2.2. It is, therefore, important that any Councillor does not show themselves as having a 'closed mind' at the time they make a decision in Council. There is an expectation that Councillors will approach any decision making with a fair and open mind albeit, that they have a predisposition to a certain view. It could be hard to argue this, if they have taken a proactive stance such as voting during the meeting of a group or taken a lead role in the organisation. Any action which was shown them to have already made up their mind before participating in the Council's decision making process places the Council's process at risk. It would also impact on the Council's reputation.
- 2.3. Councillors should therefore avoid placing themselves in a position where it gives rise to a conflict of interest and interferes with the democratic process. This does not serve the interests of the community if there is a lack of confidence in the process.

3. Southwater Parish Council

- 3.1 The Parish Council has a policy to appoint representatives to various community organisations when asked to do so by that organisation. This is considered by the Council a useful conduit for information sharing and knowledge.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 The appointment by the Council of a Councillor to an organisation is as an observer for the purpose of representing the Parish Council and its policies.
- 4.2 When voting on a particular matter when appointed to a management committee, the Member concerned should ensure that the matter at hand is in direct line with the Parish Council's policy or has been previously approved by the Council, enabling further participation by the Councillor. If this is not the case, then the Councillor should ask that the matter be referred to consideration to the Parish Council and if

this is not possible, then the Councillor must abstain from the vote. The Council should then be advised at the earliest opportunity by the Councillor, the date and time of the meeting along with any decisions made at that meeting by the outside group/organisation.