



# **GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

## **PLANNING PROTOCOL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

### **(TO BE USED WHEN CONSIDERING PLANNING/TREE APPLICATIONS)**

All planning applications made to North Dorset District Council (our District Planning Authority for sites within or immediately adjacent to the town boundary) and Dorset County Council are referred to the Town Council as a statutory consultee. Set out below is how the Town Council considers and responds to applications.

#### **1. Declarations of Interest**

##### **Individual councillors should:**

- 1.01 Declare any direct or indirect pecuniary/personal interests.
- 1.02 Withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is being discussed and voted upon if a pecuniary interest is declared.

##### **Councillors must not:**

- 1.03 Act as an agent for people pursuing planning matters within the council.

#### **2. Lobbying and access to councillors**

Prior to the applications being considered at the Planning Committee meeting, all members of the council, and in particular Planning Committee members, should treat planning matters as follows:-

- 2.01 Act in the public interest with regards to planning matters and not individual constituents or particular interest.
- 2.02 Act fairly and openly and determine each application on its own merits.
- 2.03 Report any approaches by lobbyists and any representations made to you to the relevant planning officer.
- 2.04 Make it clear that you will not be in a position to make a recommendation on a particular application until you have heard all the evidence at the planning committee meeting.
- 2.05 Refer any request to attend or organise a meeting to discuss a planning proposal that has yet to be submitted to the appropriate planning officer.

#### **3. All members of the council, and in particular Planning Committee members, should treat Planning matters as follows:**

- 3.01 Listen to the views expressed.
- 3.02 Offer clarification of relevant planning policies and suggest referral to the District Planning Case Officer, if necessary.
- 3.03 Seek factual information about the progress of a case.
- 3.04 Advise those who are lobbying that they should contact the relevant District Planning Case Officer.

- 3.05 Advise those who are lobbying to write or speak to a member who is not on the planning committee.
- 3.06 Keep an open mind and be willing to listen to all the arguments, representations and evidence presented at the planning committee meeting.
- 3.07 Determine each planning application on its own merits and in accordance with planning policies.
- 3.08 Ensure that recommendations are based on relevant planning policies.
- 3.09 Not to predetermine or judge a planning application until all relevant information has been received at the Planning Committee meeting.
- 4. All members of the council, and in particular Planning Committee members, are advised not to:**
- 4.01 Give ground to doubt their impartiality.
- 4.02 Use their position improperly for personal gain or to advantage any individual or group, including relatives, friends or close associates.
- 4.03 Lobby for a particular outcome on a planning application.
- 4.04 Meet developers alone or put themselves in a position where they appear to favour a person, company or group.
- 4.05 Take payment, or reward in kind, to lobby the council on a planning matter.
- 4.06 Do anything which compromises, or which is likely to compromise, the impartiality of those who work for, or work on behalf of the Town Council.
- 5. Site Visit Protocol**
- 5.01 Site visits may be arranged at the discretion of the Planning Committee Chairman.
- 5.02 During the site visit councillors are advised not to openly engage in discussion with residents or interested parties and be mindful of sections 2, 3 and 4.
- 5.03 Any hospitality should be politely declined.
- 5.04 Site visits by individuals are discouraged due to reasons of personal safety and integrity.
- 6. Tree and associated matters**
- 6.01 The appointed Tree Warden representing Gillingham Town Council must not enter land without prior permission of the landowner. Trees should be viewed from a public view point in order to protect the personal safety and integrity of the warden.
- 6.02 If the tree application cannot be seen from a public view point, then the application should be referred back to the Tree Officer at North Dorset District Council for a decision.
- 7. Rights of Way Liaison Officer representing Gillingham Town Council**
- 7.01 The Rights of Way Liaison Officer should be mindful of their personal safety and abide by their guidance document provided by Dorset County Council.

# THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

## **1. Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

## **2. Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

## **3. Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

## **4. Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

## **5. Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

## **6. Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

## **7. Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

11<sup>th</sup> July 2016