



CCMS

Council for Catholic
Maintained Schools

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK



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INTRODUCTION:

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is the advocate for the Catholic Maintained schools sector in Northern Ireland.

Established under the auspices of 1989 Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order, the Council's primary purpose is the provision of an upper tier of management for the Catholic Maintained sector with the primary objective of raising standards in Catholic Maintained schools.

The seminal activities of the Council are set out in Articles 142-146 and Schedule 8 of the 1989 Education Reform (NI) Order and are as follows:

- to employ all such teachers as are required on the staffs of Catholic Maintained schools;
- to advise the Department or a board on such matters relating to Catholic Maintained schools as the Department or board may refer to the Council or as the Council may see fit;
- to promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the trustees of Catholic Maintained schools, the planning of the effective provision of such schools;
- to promote the effective management and control of Catholic Maintained Schools by the boards of governors of such schools;
- to provide or secure, with the approval of the Department, the provision of such advice and information to the trustees, boards of governors, principal and staff of Catholic Maintained schools as appears to the Council to be appropriate in connection with the Council's duty; and
- to exercise such other functions as are conferred on it by the Education Orders.

CONSTITUTION OF COUNCIL:

There are 36 seats on Council, made up as follows:

- Trustee representatives (20)
- Department of Education representatives (8)
- Parent representatives (4)
- Teacher representatives (4)

PROCEDURES FOR THE APPOINTMENT AND INDUCTION OF MEMBERS:

Trustee representatives are appointed by the Trustees. Department of Education (hereinafter referred to as DE) representatives are appointed by DE through a process of public advertisements followed by interview and selection. Parent and teacher representatives are appointed through a self-nomination and interview process conducted by a sub-committee of the Council. At the outset of their term of office, Council members go through a formal induction scheme and an approved training programme on good governance in public office. Arrangements are also made to keep members trained on good practice in recruitment and selection.

MEMBERSHIP:

The Council is currently made up of thirty-six members. Twenty members were appointed by The Trustees; eight appointees are from DE, four teacher representatives were selected and four parent representatives were chosen from the Board of Governors.

Council members oversee and authorise the strategic and operational policies and procedures of CCMS. They also take an overview of the work undertaken by the other sub-committees

ROLES OF COMMITTEES:

The work of CCMS is assisted by a system of formal and informal committees, working groups and panels – each supported by CCMS officers. The formal committees approve, monitor and evaluate the relevant aspects of the Corporate and Business Plans. Final decisions on all matters of policy formulation remain with the Council itself. Given the ongoing changes in education, the responsibilities of the committees are subject to periodic review.

Presently they are as follows:

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee supports the Accounting Officer and Council by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances on governance, risk management, the control environment and the integrity of financial statements and the annual report.

Chairpersons' Committee

The Chairpersons' Committee comprises the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council along with the Chair of each of the Council's sub-committees. It has an overarching role in setting the agenda for all Council business as well as examining and reviewing the performance of the Chief Executive - this includes performance against objectives and targets, in addition to reviewing and recommending remuneration for the Chief Executive to Council (in accordance with guidance as laid down by DE).

Education Curricular Committee (ECC)

The main purpose of the Education Curricular Committee is to review strategies and structures with a view to improving standards within Catholic maintained schools.

Education Provision Committee (EPC)

The Education Provision Committee maintains a strategic overview of the school network within the Catholic maintained sector with a view to ensuring that school provision matches area needs.



ROLES OF COMMITTEES:

The list of present committees continued from the previous page:

Finance and Personnel Committee (FPC)

The main purpose of the Finance and Personnel Committee is to provide detailed challenges and scrutiny to the CCMS Business Plan, the use of all financial resources and the application of HR policies.

Diocesan Education Committees (DECs)

The five Diocesan Education Committees offer a diocesan perspective on strategies, policies and performance. They also play an important quality assurance role in the appointment to prescribed posts, i.e. Principal and Vice-Principal, and advise Council on matters of area planning.

Recruitment, Ratification and Appeals Committees

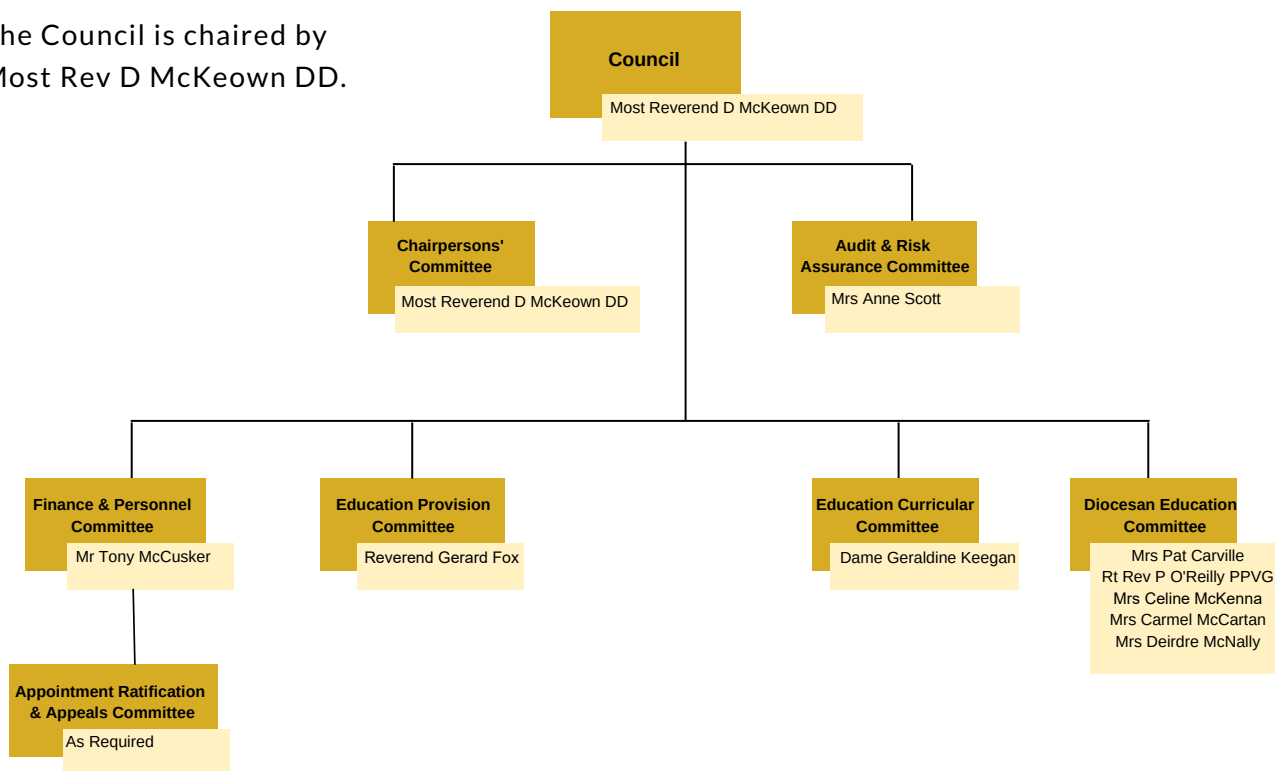
The Recruitment, Ratification and Appeals Committees quality assure the application of recruitment and selection schemes by Boards of Governors. They will also consider any appeals in relation to the maladministration of the schemes.

REGISTER OF INTEREST:

A Register of Interests of all Council Members and Officers is held by CCMS. During the year this was augmented with new policies on the Declaration of Interests (for the Declaration of Interest form and Guidance see Appendix 1) and on a Code of Conduct in Public Office (See Appendix 2)

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE :

The Council is chaired by Most Rev D McKeown DD.



Length of each term of appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairperson and Vice Chairperson – 4 years Appointed and nominated members – 4 years
Remuneration (per annum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairperson - £4878 plus travel & subsistence expenses Members - travel and subsistence expenses
Estimated workload	Council meets 5 days per year

FINANCE STRUCTURE :

The Council agreed framework for remuneration.

Period	Attendance Allowance Payable in any period of 24 hrs	Financial Loss Allowance Payable in any period of 24 hrs
Up to and including 4 hours	£22.00	£27.65
More than 4 hours	£30.39	£55.31

Expenses	£	Notes
Mileage	£0.45	Per Mile
Parking		On production of a receipt.
(Alternative) Loss of Earnings		On completion of claim form



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COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Effective from 1st April 2021

Trustee Representatives:

Name	Current Term	Service (Years)
Most Rev Donal McKeown DD, Bishop of Derry (Chair of Council)	01/11/2019	17
Dame Geraldine Keegan, DBE, Retired Principal St Mary's College, Derry	01/11/2019	13
Sr Eithne Woulfe, Education Co Director, Conference of Religious of Ireland	01/11/2019	17
Mrs Pat Carville, OBE, Retired Principal St Patrick's College, Dungannon (Vice-Chair of Council)	01/11/2019	17
Very Rev Dean Kevin Donaghy, Retired Principal St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	01/11/2019	13
Rev Paul Farran, Administrator St Eugene's Cathedral & Director of the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre	01/04/2022	0
Mr Tony McCusker, Retired Civil Servant	01/11/2019	4
Rt Rev Mgr Peter O'Reilly PP VG, Clogher Diocese	01/11/2019	4
Mr Pat McCartan, Chair of BOG, St Columbanus' College, Bangor	01/11/2019	4
Rev Dr Paul Fleming, Senior Tutor, St Mary's University College	01/11/2019	0
Rev Gerard Fox, Associate Episcopal Vicar for Education, Down and Connor Diocese	01/11/2019	3
Mrs Anne Scott, Retired Principal St Patrick's College, Maghera (Chair Audit and Risk Assurance Committee)	01/11/2019	2
Mrs Martha Smyth, Retired Principal of St Fanchea's College, Enniskillen	01/11/2019	0
Dr Bob Cummings, Dominican Education Trustee Representative and former Principal, Dominican College, Portstewart	01/11/2019	0
Mrs Diane Russell, Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST)	01/05/2021	0
Very Rev Lawrence Boyle PP VF, Cookstown Parish	01/11/2019	0
Most Rev Michael Router DD, Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh	01/11/2019	0
Mrs Catherine O'Neill, Retired Teacher	01/11/2019	0
Mrs Deirdre McNally, Retired Principal St Mary's Junior High School, Lurgan	01/11/2019	1
Very Rev John Chester PP, Roslea Parish	01/11/2019	0

Teacher Representatives:

Mrs Aideen McGovern, St Patricks PS, Derrygonnelly	01/02/2021	0
Mr Eamon McDowell, St Louise's College, Belfast	01/02/2021	0
Ms Karen McElroy, New Row PS, Castledawson	01/02/2021	0
Mr Justin McCormack, All Saints' College, Belfast	01/02/2021	0



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COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Effective from 1st April 2021

Department of Education Representatives:

Name	Current Term	Service (Years)
Ms Maxine Murphy-Higgins, NASUWT Representative	01/11/2019	4
Mr Hugh Cox, retired Student Union Administrator	01/11/2019	4
Ms Patricia Corrigan, Senior Lecturer in Business and Enterprise at Stranmillis University College	01/11/2019	4
Mr John Allen, Director of Operational Support Services NI Fire and Rescue	01/05/2021	0
Mr James Beatty, Independent Assessor Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI, Board of Governors St Martins Nursery School	01/05/2021	0
Mrs Nuala Toman, Disability Support Tutor Ulster and Queens University	01/05/2021	0
Dr Mary McIvor, Retired Northern Ireland Civil Service	01/05/2021	4
Dr Anna Kerr, Company Director CEON	01/05/2021	4

Parent Representatives:

Ms Ciara Faloona, St Bernard's PS, Rosetta, Belfast	01/02/2021	0
Ms Wendy Gibbons, St Joseph's Boys School, Derry	01/01/2021	0
Ms Ciara Farry, Holy Trinity PS, Enniskillen	01/01/2021	0
Dr Justin Quinn, St Francis PS, Derrylatinee, Dungannon	01/01/2021	0

This list is correct at the time of publication - It should be noted that Members may change as service ends. An up to date list of all serving Members can be found at www.onlineccms.com

APPENDIX 1

Declaration of Interests

CONTENTS:

- Guidance Notes
- Checklist
- Declaration of Interest Proforma
- Council Policy
- Privacy Notice



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GUIDANCE NOTES :

Members and staff of Council are required under the Code of Practice for Board members of Public Bodies, to declare any personal or business interests which may conflict with their responsibilities as Members of Council or its staff. Members and staff should not participate in any Council matter where such a conflict may arise.

A conflict of interest arises when an individual has two separate interests that overlap. Northern Ireland Audit Office created the document; *Conflicts of Interest-A Good Practice Guide*, which describes a Conflict of Interest as :

“A conflict of interest involves a conflict between the public duty and the private interest of a public official in which the official’s private-capacity interest could improperly influence the performance of his/her official duties and responsibilities.”

A conflict of interest may be:

- Membership of the boards/councils of other public bodies (including Boards of Governors or schools, colleges and universities).
- Office held as a member of a political party or as an elected representative.
- Membership of boards of commercial or voluntary bodies which would not be obvious from the Council member’s stated occupation.
- Gifts, hospitality or other benefits received
- Pecuniary interest as a significant shareholder of a commercial organisation.
- Retention as a consultant/lobbyist on behalf of a commercial organization, charity or voluntary body; and
- A close family relationship or personal relationship that would be, or be seen to be, a conflict of interest within your professional role with CCMS

The Northern Ireland Audit Office paper further suggests that conflict of interest can also be perceived, it states.

“A perceived conflict of interest exists where it could be perceived, or appears, that private capacity interests could improperly influence the performance of a public official or Board member’s official duties and responsibilities. A perception of a conflict of interest can be just as significant as an actual conflict of interest.”

The key issue is when determining to note a conflict of interest is the idea that if a fair-minded outside observer, acting reasonably, would conclude that there is a possibility of bias it must be mentioned. It is entirely a matter of individual judgement as to what is registered.

Although reminders will be issued, Council members and officers are asked to notify the Clerk to Council of any necessary changes to the register as they occur.

A consolidated, Register of Members’ and staff Interests is maintained by the Clerk to Council and is accessible to members of the public on request.

A full copy of the Northern Ireland Audit Office created the document; Conflicts of Interest-A Good Practice Guide can be found at the following link
https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/sites/niao/files/media-files/conflicts_of_interest_good_practice_guide.pdf

CHECKLIST FOR MEMBERS:

Do you think you have an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest?

The following checklist may help when assessing the situation:

1. Would I or anyone associated with me benefit from, or be detrimentally affected by, my proposed decision or action?
2. Could there be benefits for me in the future that could cast doubt on my objectivity?
3. Do I have a current or previous personal, professional or financial relationship or association of any significance with an interested party?
4. Would my reputation or that of a relative, friend or associate stand to be enhanced or damaged because of the proposed decision or action?
5. Do I or a relative, friend or associate stand to gain or lose financially in some covert or unexpected way?
6. Do I hold any personal or professional views or biases that may lead others to reasonably conclude that I am not an appropriate person to deal with the matter?
7. Have I contributed in a private capacity in any way to the matter my organisation is dealing with?
8. Have I made any promises or commitments in relation to the matter?
9. Have I received a substantial gift, benefit or hospitality from someone who stands to gain or lose from my proposed decision or action?
10. Am I a member of an association, club or professional organisation or do I have particular ties and affiliations with organisations or individuals who stand to gain or lose by my proposed decision or action?
11. Could this situation have an influence on any future employment opportunities outside my current official duties?
12. Could there be any other benefits or factors that could cast doubt on my objectivity?

If the answer is "Yes" to any of these questions you must declare the issue. Not all conflicts of interest are wrong or unethical, but declaring them from the outset ensures openness, honesty and transparency. It is expected that you will excuse yourself from discussions where any conflict would arise.

The guiding principle should be to err on the side of caution when deciding what items to include and seek clarification as required from the Council Secretariat Manager.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST 2021/22

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Council Member and CCMS Officers

Name of Council Member or Officer: _____

1. Membership of, or employment in, a board of trustees, council, management committee or other governing body or any organisation which may impact on your role with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS):

2. Ownership of land or property, financial stake or shareholding in any organisations which may impact on your role with CCMS:

3. Close family or close personal connection with an individual involved (either as a member of the management or as an employee) in any organisations which may impact on your role with CCMS:

4. Are you a member of a Board of Governors, or do you work in a school? If so, please give details:

5. (a) Any other interests which might reasonably be supposed to influence your judgement, or which might affect your ability to appear impartial, on matters with which you are likely to be concerned in your capacity as Council Member or Officer of CCMS
- (b) Have any gifts of hospitality (exceeding the value of £50) been offered to you by external bodies in your capacity as a Council Member or Officer of CCMS in the last twelve months and was it declined or accepted (Please detail accepted items):

It is the responsibility of individual Council Members to ensure that the information held by Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is accurate, comprehensive and up to date.

Declaration,

To the best of my knowledge, the above information is complete and correct. I have set out my interests above in accordance with the principles of public office. I undertake to update the information provided as necessary and I give my consent for it to be used for audit purposes within CCMS. This information may not be used for any other purposes.

SIGNED NAME :

Position in Council/CCMS:

Date:

- Please return to Alison Russell,
CCMS Lisburn, Linen Hill House,
23 Linenhall Street Lisburn,
BT28 1JF



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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS 2020/2021

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools : Council Member and CCMS Officers

As all questions are required would you please enter N/A where there is a nil return.

This form should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

* Required

1. Name of Council Member or Officer: *

Enter your answer

2. Membership of, or employment in, a board of trustees, council, management committee or other governing body or any organisation which may impact on your role with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS):

*

Enter your answer

3. Ownership of land or property, financial stake or shareholding in any organisations which may impact on your role with CCMS:

*

Enter your answer

4. Are you a member of a Board of Governors, or work in a school? If so, please give details:

*

Enter your answer

5. (a) Any other interests which might reasonably be supposed to influence your judgment, or which might affect your ability to appear impartial, on matters with which you are likely to be concerned in your capacity as a Council Member or Officer of CCMS: *

Enter your answer

6. (b) Have any gifts or hospitality (exceeding value of £50) been offered to you by external bodies in your capacity as a Council Member or Officer of CCMS in the last twelve months and was it declined or accepted (Please detail accepted items) *

Enter your answer

7.

It is the responsibility of individual Council Members to ensure that the information held by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is accurate, comprehensive and up to date.

Declaration;

To the best of my knowledge, the above information is complete and correct. I have set out my interests above in accordance with the principles of public service. I undertake to update the information provided as necessary and I give my consent for it to be used for audit purposes within the CCMS. This information may not be used for any other purposes.

Please enter your **Position in Council/CCMS** in the box below *

Enter your answer

8. Please enter the date in the box below. *

Please input date in format of dd/MM/yyyy



Submit

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS 2019/2020

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools :
Council Member and CCMS Officers

Name of Council Member or Officer: _____

- 1 Membership of, or employment in, a board of trustees, council, management committee or other governing body or any organisation which may impact on your role with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS):

- 2 Ownership of land or property, financial stake or shareholding in any organisations which may impact on your role with CCMS:

- 3 Close family or close personal connection with an individual involved (either as a member of the management or as an employee) in any organisations which may impact on your role with CCMS :

- 4 Are you a member of a Board of Governors, or work in a school? If so, please give details:

- 5 (a) Any other interests which might reasonably be supposed to influence your judgment, or which might affect your ability to appear impartial, on matters with which you are likely to be concerned in your capacity as a Council Member or Officer of CCMS:
(b) Have any gifts or hospitality (exceeding value of £50) been offered to you by external bodies in your capacity as a Council Member or Officer of CCMS in the last twelve months and was it declined or accepted (Please detail accepted items)

It is the responsibility of individual Council Members to ensure that the information held by Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is accurate, comprehensive and up to date.

Declaration:

To the best of my knowledge, the above information is complete and correct. I have set out my interests above in accordance with the principles of public service. I undertake to update the information provided as necessary and I give my consent for it to be used for audit purposes within CCMS. This information may not be used for any other purposes

SIGNED NAME: _____

Position in
Council/CCMS : _____

DATE: _____

- Please return to Alison Russell, CCMS Lisburn, Linen Hill House, 23 Linenhall Street, Lisburn, BT28 1F1



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COUNCIL POLICY :

Members are asked to complete the proforma in accordance with the CCMS Council Policy on Conflict of Interests.

Members and staff are asked to note that the following privacy statement will appear on the proforma and are asked to sign and return the proforma, including a NIL return for auditing purposes.

To achieve the maximum degree of openness and impartiality, the Council maintains a register of interests of Council Members and Officers. Council Members and Officers are asked to register their interests on appointment, as and when any new interests arise, and, thereafter, at the beginning of each financial year. Where Members and Officers have no interests to declare, this should also be indicated. The Northern Ireland Audit Office has suggested that, where doubt exists, you declare everything, even though you may feel it is not relevant to CCMS.

Where an interest which has been declared ceases for any reason, the declaration shall remain in force for a period of one year to preserve the spirit of openness and impartiality

PRIVACY NOTICE:

CCMS requires this information to enable it to comply with recommendations identified by the Northern Ireland Audit Office through external audit and to implement best practices. The information provided will be used to identify and effectively manage potential Conflicts of Interest in conducting CCMS business. This information will be contained within a register of Staff and Council Members' Interests which is available to the public. Any security-sensitive interests are not provided in the published register. It will be used solely for this purpose.

The information will be reviewed on a rolling basis and previous versions will be destroyed after the review. We will take the completion of this form as consent to the processing of the same.

APPENDIX 2

Code of Conduct

CONTENTS:

- Introduction
- Seven Principles of Public Life
- Additional Principles established by the Northern Ireland Assembly
- Role of Chairperson
- Corporate Responsibilities of Members
- Individual Responsibilities of Members
- Personal Liability of Members
- Openness and Responsiveness:
- Conflicts of Interest
- Gifts and Hospitality



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INTRODUCTION:

This Code of Conduct for the Members of the Council forms part of the Standing Orders. Standing Order 9.2.2 requires Members to always comply with this Code of Conduct.

The aim of this Code of Conduct is to ensure that Members are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and the behaviours expected of them as a Member of the Council and a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), and the principles associated with same.

Where a member is uncertain about the application of the Code of Conduct to a particular situation, he or she must consult the Chairperson.

In such a situation the Chairperson will provide the Member with advice on the interpretation of this document.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE:

Members must always observe and comply with the Seven Principles of Public Life drawn up by the Committee on Standards of Public Life (the Nolan Committee).

Those Principles are;

1. **Selflessness** - Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
2. **Integrity** - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in their performance of their official duties.
3. **Objectivity** - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
4. **Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
5. **Openness** - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
6. **Honesty** - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
7. **Leadership** - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY :

In addition to the Seven Principles of Public Life, the Northern Ireland Assembly has identified 5 further principles with which Members must also comply.

The additional principles are:

1. **Equality** - Holders of public office should promote equality of opportunity and not discriminate against any person by treating people with respect regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether a person has dependents.
2. **Promoting Good Relations** - Holders of public office must act in a way that is conducive to promoting good relations by providing a positive example for the wider community to follow by acting in a way that seeks to promote a culture of respect, equality and race and which embraces diversity in all its forms.
3. **Respect** - While we acknowledge that the exchange of ideas and opinions on policies may be robust, this should be kept in context and not extend to individuals being subjected to unreasonable and excessive personal attacks. Holders of public office must always show respect and consideration for others. Rude and offensive behaviour is not acceptable as it will lower organisational reputation and confidence in public bodies and their member.
4. **Good working relationships between Members** - Members must work responsibly with other members for the benefit of the whole community. Members must treat each other with courtesy and respect and promote an effective working environment.
5. **Good working relationships between Members and Employees** - The relationship between Members and Employees must always be professional, courteous and based on mutual respect. Members must show respect and consideration for employees and ensure their actions do not compromise the impartiality of employees.

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON :

The Chairperson has additional responsibilities over and above Members, particularly in relation to strategic leadership in the conduct of Council business, these include;

- Taking lead responsibility in representing the Council in links with the Minister and the Assembly.
- Taking the lead in building links, at a senior level, with partner organisations and other stakeholders.
- Ensuring all members have proper knowledge and understanding of their corporate roles and responsibilities.
- Ensuring that the Council and its Members carry out essential functions efficiently and effectively so that:
 - All planned business is dealt with, a conclusion is reached in respect of each item and that each Member understands and commits to the Council's collective decision.
 - The Council takes proper account of Departmental guidance in reaching decisions.
 - The Council meets at regular intervals and that the minutes of meetings accurately record decisions taken and views of individual members (as appropriate)
 - The Council delegates sufficient authority to its committees.
 - All Members are given the opportunity to express their views before any important decisions are taken; and
 - The Council receives professional advice when needed.
- The Chairperson should ensure that all Members of the Council, when taking up office, are fully briefed on the terms of their appointment and on their duties, rights and responsibilities. The Chairperson and other Members of the Council should each have a copy of the Council's Standing Orders and Code of Conduct (this document); the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, the latest Corporate Plan and Annual Reports and Accounts, the Treasury's memorandum The Responsibilities of an NDPB Accounting Officer; and the Treasury's handbook Regularity and Propriety. The Chairperson should encourage new members to attend an induction course on the duties of Members of the Council or some other suitable induction programme, agreed by Council.

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON :

- Developing an efficient working relationship with the Chief Executive:
 - Overseeing the way the Chief Executive, together with other members of the Senior Leadership Team, implements Council decisions; and
 - Agreeing the Chief Executive's annual performance targets and undertaking performance reviews, where appropriate, gaining Council approval for both the targets and performance review.
 - Ensuring the formulation of the Council's strategy for discharging its statutory duties.
 - Encouraging high standards of propriety and promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources throughout the organisation.
 - Representing the views of the Council to the public; and
 - Providing an annual assessment of the performance of individual Council Members and assessment when they are being considered for reappointment to the Council or for appointment to the Board of some other public body.
- Communications between the Council and the Minister will normally be through the Chairperson except when the Council has agreed that an individual member should act on its behalf. However, any individual Member has the right of access to the Minister on any matter which he or she believes raises important issues relating to his or her duties as a Member of the Council. In such cases agreement should normally be sought from the rest of the Council Members.
- The main point of Contact between the Council and the Department on its day-to-day matters will normally be the Chief Executive or another member of staff who is authorised to act on behalf of the Council.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS:

Members of the Council have corporate responsibility for ensuring that it complies with statutory and administrative requirements for the use of public funds. Other important responsibilities of Council Members include;

- Ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times.
- Establishing the overall strategic direction of the Council within the policy and resources framework agreed with the Minister.
- Ensuring that the Council operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with the department, and in accordance with any others relating to the use of public funds.
- Ensuring that, in reaching decisions, the Council has taken into account any guidance issued by the Department.
- Formulating a strategy for implementing the principles and requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000; the Data Protection Act 1998 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 including prompt response to public requests for information and meeting other requirements for openness and responsiveness; and
- Ensuring that the Council operates within the framework of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS:

Individual Members should be aware of their wider responsibilities as Members. Like others who serve the public, they should follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out in Section II of this Code of Conduct document and the additional principles set out in Section III.

Council Members must;

- Undertake on appointment to always comply with this Code of Conduct and with government rules and guidance relating to the use of public funds.
- Act in good faith and in the best interests of the Council.
- Not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purposes, not seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations.
- Not disclose any information which is confidential in nature, or which is provided in confidence without authority. This duty continues to apply after he or she has left the Council.
- Ensure that they comply with the Council's procedures on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.
- Respect the principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility. This means that once the Council has decided, Members should support that decision; and
- Comply with all statutory or administrative requirements relating to the post.

In their public role on the Council, Members should be and be seen to be politically impartial. Members may engage in political activities, provided they remain conscious of their responsibilities as a Member and exercise proper discretion, particularly in regard to the work of the Council. Members should inform the Chairperson prior to undertaking any political activity which might question their impartiality, providing a detailed specification of what their role or involvement shall be. The Council shall consider each case individually, ensuring that the Member's engagement in a political activity does not impact on their role or the overall role of the Council. Disclosures in respect of same should be made to Council on a timely basis to allow consideration of the matter.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS CONTINUED:

The arrangements for appointing individual Members of public bodies make it possible to remove them from office if they fail to perform the duties required of them to the standards expected of persons who hold public office.

PERSONAL LIABILITY OF MEMBERS:

Although any legal proceedings initiated by a third party are likely to be brought against the Council, in exceptional proceedings (civil or, in certain cases, criminal) may be brought against the Chairperson or other individual Members. For example, a Member may be personally liable if he or she makes a fraudulent or negligent statement that results in loss to a third party. Members who misuse information gained by virtue of their position may be liable for breach of confidence under common law or may commit a criminal offence under insider dealing legislation.

However, the government has indicated that individual Members who have acted honestly and in good faith will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in the execution of their functions as a Member of the Council, except where the Member has acted recklessly.

Members who need further advice should consult, through the Chairperson, the Council's legal advisers, who must also be informed at the earliest possible moment if a Member believes that there is a possibility of legal action being taken against him or her or against the Council.

OPENESS AND RESPONSIVENESS:

Members should conduct all their dealings with the public in an open and responsible way to ensure full compliance with the principles of the Freedom of Information Act 2000; the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

They should take into account as far as possible of the 'Standard of Best Practice for Openness in Executive NDPBs and NHS bodies' in the first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CM 2850-1).

The Council shall make provision for information to be circulated to the public so that the public will be aware of decisions other than;

- Decisions on issues upon which debate within the Council has not, yet, resulted in definitive conclusions.
- Decisions on issues that are confidential for other good reasons.

Those arrangements will be given appropriate publicity.

Members should assure themselves that the Council can demonstrate that it is using resources to good effect, with propriety, and without grounds for criticism that public funds are being used for private, biased or party-political purposes.

The Council will need to act consistently with the nature of its functions and the possible need for confidentiality on commercial grounds, always subject to the right of the Assembly and auditors to obtain information.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The Council's Standing Orders provide a framework for handling actual and perceived conflicts of interest, Standing Order 10. Members should ensure they are in compliance with same.

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY:

Members must not accept any gifts or hospitality which might, or might reasonably appear to, compromise their judgement or integrity or place them under an improper obligation.

Members must never canvass or seek gifts or hospitality.

Members must comply with Council procedures on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality which are in line with current DFP guidance.

Members should inform the Chairperson or Chief Executive of, and seek their approval to, any offers or gifts or hospitality and ensure that, where a gift or hospitality is accepted, this is recorded in a public register, in line with Council procedures.

Members are reminded to record all gifts and hospitality, whether accepted or declined and to complete a Gifts and Hospitality return whenever required, even if it is a nil return.

Members are responsible for their decisions on the acceptance of gifts or hospitality and for ensuring that any gifts or hospitality accepted can stand up to public scrutiny and do not bring the Council into disrepute.

No Code can provide for all circumstances and if you are uncertain about how any aspect of the Code of Conduct applies, you should seek advice from the Chairperson and/or the Chief Executive of the Council who, in turn, may seek advice from the Department