

# GREEN PARTY MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

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As passed by Green Party Spring Conference 2019.

## **A) PREAMBLE**

### **1. Status of the Code**

1.1 The Members Code of Conduct is an organisational document that is binding on all members of the Green Party of England and Wales ('the Green Party'). It forms part of the national disciplinary framework that applies to all Green Party members, as set out in the Green Party of England and Wales Constitution and Standing Orders for Party Discipline.

1.2 Other Party documents set out that a breach of this Code of Conduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary action. When considering disciplinary action, it is the clauses in the section titled Standards that must be considered, in conjunction with the Scope and Status of the Code. Documents that are formally appended to this Code, as set out below, are to be considered part of the Standards section.

### **2 Scope**

2.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a clear set of standards that must not be breached, to guide members and non-member volunteers in how they are expected to conduct themselves. In the rest of this document where 'members' are mentioned, non-member volunteers are also included.

2.2 It also applies to all activities carried out for or on behalf of the Green Party, for which Green Party members or non-member volunteers are responsible, including informal social activities and any other forms of interaction at which Green Party members are present.

2.3 Members are expected to display the same high standards of conduct in their interactions with staff. The Party has in addition a set of policies specifically for paid staff and how to deal with matters arising within employment situations.

2.4 This Code of Conduct stands alongside and complements other organisational Party documentation, such as the Safe Spaces policy and the Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination (& Whistleblowing) policy and Safeguarding Policy. However only documents formally appended to this Code may be considered a part of it for disciplinary purposes.

### **3 Oversight**

This document is to be kept under review by a group consisting of: the Co-Chairs of Green Party Regional Council, the Chair of Disciplinary Committee, the Coordinator of Disputes Resolution Committee, and the Chair of GPEx, or their deputies or substitutes.

### **4 Mechanism for updating, revising & appending documents to the Code**

4.1 Updating – Standing Orders Committee may make simple updating corrections to this Code as to numbering, terminology, names of groups, procedures or documents as they change and should do so promptly so as to keep this document relevant, up to date and fit for purpose.

4.2 Revision – The oversight body may propose revisions to this document on which it has reached consensus after consultation with relevant staff. If there is consensus, a change will take effect immediately.

All revisions, as well as proposed revisions for which there is a majority in favour but not consensus, are to be ratified via inclusion in a report from the oversight body to the next Conference. Subject to a majority Conference vote in favour of the report, any revision shall take immediate and permanent effect.

4.3 Appending documents – From time to time a body with the competent authority to do so may produce an organisational document and propose that it be appended to this Code of Conduct. The proposal must specify exactly which clauses or parts of clauses are to be appended, which has the effect of making them grounds for disciplinary action. A consensus decision of the oversight body is sufficient to bring the appendance into effect, subject to ratification, as set out in the above clause.

4.4 No appended document may nullify or be in conflict with any clause in this Code, the GPEW Constitution or the Standing Orders for Party Discipline. A document proposed to be appended to this Code under para 4.3 also may not be in conflict with or nullify a document that is already appended to it.

4.5 The procedures set out in clauses 3.3. & 3.4 may also be used in reverse to unappend a document or section of a document.

## **5 Appended documents**

Each appended document or part document is to be listed here, giving precise details of which the appended clauses are; the date of appendance; the means of or authority for appendance; and the date or version number of the appended document.

The following documents or sections of documents are appended to this Code. A breach of them constitutes a breach of this Code for disciplinary purposes.

- i. The Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination (&Whistleblowing) policy  
Clauses appended: full document  
Appendance date: 15/04/2015  
Appended via: a decision of Conference  
Oversight body: GPEX  
Version number of document: version 1, dated 15/04/2015

## **6 Green Philosophy & Values**

The Green Party's approach to ethical conduct is guided by its philosophical basis and core values, which include a commitment to freedom of self-expression and the non-violent resolution of conflict.

Philosophical Basis para 401

'The Green Party affirms the importance of individual freedom and self-expression. We believe people should be free to make their own decisions on matters which do not adversely affect others. Its importance lies in valuing the opportunity people have to make their own decisions, accept responsibility for them and develop in their own way.'

## Green Party Core Value 8.

'We look for non-violent solutions to conflict situations, which take into account the interests of minorities and future generations in order to achieve lasting settlements.'  
These perspectives inform the following standards for conduct.

## **B) STANDARDS**

The following clauses each contain standards that must not be breached.

### **7 Organisational guidance & procedures and legal responsibilities**

7.1 Members have a general duty to respect decisions made by the National Party, any local or Regional Party or any other Party body or group through democratic process. This includes, but is not limited to, internal organisational guidance and procedures on: ethics and conduct, as well as legal responsibilities relating to safeguarding, financial accounting, data handling and electoral law.

7.2 Members should maintain civilised standards of conduct towards each other and others such as political opponents or non-members when acting in a Party capacity, or when identifiable as a Green Party member.

7.3 Members should take care to not bring the Green Party into disrepute by engaging in unethical conduct.

7.4 Membership of the Party does not affect the statutory rights or obligations of a Member. No Member or Party body may attempt to persuade another Member to forego or breach a statutory right or obligation

### **8 Freedom of expression**

8.1 Members' right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief should be respected.

8.2 Members who dissent from a decision or an official policy must ensure they make it clear that they are expressing disagreement as an individual and not as a representative of the Party or any part of it. However they must take care to maintain civilised standards of conduct and to not bring the Party into disrepute while doing so.

8.3 When formally representing the Party, members must ensure that their communications about Green Party political policies do not conflict with Green Party policy before these are communicated to members or non-members. If there is dissent from political policy, members should state the Green Party policy as well as their personal view. They should also take care not to add to formal Green Party communications their personal opinions and criticisms of others.

8.4 Unless an authorised communication is being made on behalf of the Party, members should make it clear their views are their own and not necessarily those of the Party. Members who use social media or online platforms and mention their membership of, or role in, the Green Party (or it is known to those viewing the member's online activity) should post an adequately prominent online disclaimer to this effect.

8.5 Members who express opinions in a situation in which their membership of the Green Party is known must take care to not bring the party into disrepute.

### **9 Safe space & civility**

9.1 The Green Party should be an organisation in which people can feel comfortable, feel welcome and enjoy being a member and taking part in its activities. Members' behaviour towards each other and non-members should therefore be: tolerant, considerate, respectful and civil.

9.2 The Green Party should also be a space that is as safe or safer than society as a whole. Therefore discriminatory, oppressive or abusive behaviour should be prevented and stopped when it occurs. The aim is to provide an environment free of this. Any form of such behaviour is a breach of this Code, as is failure by a person in a role with responsibility, such as a Chair, Moderator or similar to take appropriate action to prevent or stop it. Members should also be aware of risks and act to mitigate them.

9.3 Members should in all their interactions with colleagues, assume the best of them.

9.4 Members should not: shout at someone; be aggressive in their manner; make belittling, derogatory or disparaging remarks about another member; insult a member or disrupt a meeting or discussion.

## **10 Inclusion**

10.1 Members should be inviting and inclusive to ensure members feel confident to join in and get involved.

10.2 Members should ensure that all members are encouraged to contribute to discussion and decision-making at meetings and that everyone is listened to properly, without being interrupted unnecessarily. Decisions should be made by consensus wherever possible.

10.3 Members should work collaboratively with all members of the Party.

10.4 Members should help other members develop skills to fully participate in democratic processes and Party activities.

10.5 Members should trust other members and supporters in the discharge of their responsibilities, allowing them room for initiative and judgement.

10.6 Members should seek support when they need it and offer it when appropriate.

10.7 Members should communicate with others with due consideration to time, place and manner. Acknowledge communications from others swiftly and give an expected time-scale for a full reply.

10.8 Members should thank or praise colleagues when appropriate for the time and effort spent on behalf of you or the Party.

10.9 Members should communicate sensitively and courteously at all times with other members, whether face-to-face, by phone, by email, letter or in social media.

10.10 Members should be aware when contacting other members that they may have jobs, family or other constraints on their time and be patient in expecting a response. Members should also not put undue pressure on others to volunteer their time or overburden them with work or responsibility beyond their capacity.

10.11 Members organising or chairing events and activities have a responsibility to be aware of the needs of those involved and a duty of care to act sensitively, civilly and inclusively. They also have a duty of care towards those participating in such events or activities that they not be put in harm's way through negligence or failure to assess risk.

10.12 In addition, members should be afforded adequate and timely access to information about planned meetings or activities that they could take part in or observe; and equal access to information or papers being used during a meeting or activity they are taking part in, including minutes, that would enable them to participate on an equal basis with other members present. This requirement does not apply where a legitimate disciplinary sanction has removed these rights from a member.

## **11 Diversity**

11.1 Members should welcome diversity in the Party and strive to accommodate the different needs of members wherever possible. Welcoming diversity encompasses respect towards and active consideration of people's individual differences as well as their diverse cultural backgrounds.

11.2 Members responsible must actively take steps to ensure events and activities are as accessible, inclusive and welcoming as is reasonably possible to both members and the public, as appropriate, taking into account both anticipatable and known general and individual needs.

11.3 Members must not behave in a discriminatory manner towards someone on the basis of any protected characteristic that person may have.

## **12 Differences**

12.1 As the Green Party welcomes people from a wide range of backgrounds, members may encounter people who hold differing political or philosophical worldviews. Freedom of belief and the right to change that belief is a fundamental human right. Members should therefore show tolerance and respect towards people that hold political or philosophical worldviews that differ from their own.

12.2 The Philosophical Basis and the Constitution of the Green Party require that the legitimate interests of all people be taken into account and that decisions be made by consensus if possible. Any time a group of people gets together members should expect - and not be intolerant of - differing ideas regarding how to approach problem solving, objective setting and work methods. This is not in and of itself a bad thing and should be managed by members in a cooperative, inclusive and collaborative manner. Positive dialogue should be encouraged and angry abuse must be prevented.

12.3 When a dispute exists members are expected to take special care to behave in a civil manner towards other members and take even greater care than normal not to indulge in behaviour that could be perceived as provocative, intimidating or offensive.

## **13 Infighting & cliques**

13.1 Members should not use criticism to hurt, humiliate or belittle, undermine or otherwise attack someone. 'Attack the argument, not the person' is an approach that should be followed in debating situations.

13.2 Members are entitled to disagree but should not treat others adversely or with discourtesy or open hostility due to political opposition.

13.3 Members should refrain from criticising other Party members publicly, including any situations where non-members may be present. If criticism is felt to be necessary, it should be done sensitively and constructively by those given that responsibility. Criticism should be of actions and behaviour or statements etc., not of the person. Avoid labels, name calling and stigmatising a person.

## **14 Vexatious or malicious complaints**

Making a clearly vexatious or malicious complaint; using a complaint as part of a pattern of harassment; clearly abusing the complaint system to attack a personal enemy or political

opponent or another person within the Green Party are all forms of unacceptable behaviour.

## **15 Smears and rumours**

15.1 Members must not spread malicious rumour or unfounded negative gossip or hearsay about other members.

15.2 Members must use the appropriate internal procedures to address concerns, grievances and complaints. The Party also has a Whistleblowing procedure. Complaints should be dealt with through a proper complaint procedure and not discussed as part of an ordinary meeting agenda, nor made publicly, nor used to bring the Party into disrepute.

15.3 Members should take care to not commit a disciplinary offence in the course of responding to a disciplinary offence committed by another member. Members should not resort to unacceptable conduct in any circumstances.

## **16 Confidentiality**

Members should respect the constraints of confidentiality when it is agreed by all parties to the matter under consideration, or when confidentiality has been imposed by the appropriate person(s) or body via due procedure. Challenges to confidentiality must be made via appropriate channels. This duty does not override member's whistleblowing rights.

## **17 Transparency**

17.1 Members should remember that as elected Green Party representatives their actions in their private lives can affect the reputation of the party both positively and negatively.

17.2 Members should disclose anything in their personal history that could potentially bring the Party into disrepute before they stand for election to any office within the Party or for selection as a candidate to represent the Green Party externally in any capacity. This includes opinions that are incompatible with Green Party ethics or philosophy. Disclosures should be in confidence and via appropriate procedures. The duty to disclose is an ongoing duty that persists after being selected or elected.

17.3 Members, who are involved in any way in arranging the selection, appointment, co-option or election of someone to either hold office internally or represent the Green Party externally, must ensure disclosures are obtained as set out in the preceding clause.

## **18 Procedure and authority**

18.1 Members who take office internally at any level of the Green Party must do what is needed to meet the legal obligations of the Party and to that end keep adequate records of their decisions and communications. Failure to provide records of decisions and other information to members, as required by the GPEW Constitution, is unacceptable conduct.

18.2 Decisions should be recorded and kept for future reference and should either be adhered to and implemented or changed democratically and the change recorded.

Members must follow agreed procedures. It is not acceptable conduct for a member to ignore or to seek to abuse or subvert due procedure (as interpreted by Standing Orders Committee).



18.3 Records of which responsibility or authority has been allocated to which people must be clear. Members must have the requisite authority when acting on behalf of any part of the Party and must not exceed it. It is unacceptable for a member to pass themselves off as acting as an authorised representative of the Party if they do not have the authorisation and have not followed the approved procedure for this.

18.4 Members must check with the relevant budget holder before committing Party resources other than those for which they have responsibility.

18.5 Members breach this Code if they approve expenditure or financial commitments that put their local party, or any other part of the Party, at risk of insolvency or engage in false accounting.

18.6 Members breach this Code if they break electoral law or allow members or supporters to.

18.7 Procedures agreed by members must be fair and transparent, in line with requirements set out in the GPEW Constitution.

18.8 Members have a duty to make themselves familiar with all procedures and policies relevant to their role in the Green Party.

## **19 Conflict of interest**

19.1 All written communication sent 'on behalf of the Green Party' must not be for personal gain or in conflict with GPEW core values. This applies to e-communications as well as paper-based material.

19.2 The use of Party headed notepaper and the Party logo whether on paper or in e-communications should only be for legitimate Green Party communications agreed by the appropriate body.

19.3 Members should take great care when accepting offers of money from, or entering into financial transactions with, members or supporters, friend or relatives and should record carefully the exact terms on which an agreement has been reached, as well as ensure the process is as open and transparent as possible.

19.4 Members must not take part in a decision that benefits them personally or financially.

19.5 Members have a duty to consider recusing themselves from a decision in which they have an interest and must also declare that interest. For example, candidate selection, target ward selection, disciplinary process, awarding a contract to supply goods or services, recruitment or any other decision.

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