# Meeting Etiquette and Predetermination Protocol

# Introduction

This protocol provides guidance to Xxxxx Community Council (LCC) members on general expectations around meeting etiquette and the concept of predetermination.

# Background

Elected members of Xxxxx Community Council (LCC) sign the adopted Code of Conduct, which highlights the expectation to follow the Seven Principles of Public Life:

#### Selflessness

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

#### 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.

#### Objectivity

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

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

#### 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.

# Meeting Etiquette

# Meetings are held in accordance with ’s adopted Standing Orders. They provide a framework regarding the formalities, order, duration and decision-making processes of meetings. All members are provided with a copy of the Standing Orders and it is available on the websitexxxxxxx

# In order to support the Standing Orders, this protocol sets out how members should behave in meetings:

# Be polite

# Take turns in speaking, raise your hand to speak and speak when invited to do so by the Chair. Do not hold side discussions when a meeting is in progress.

# Be considerate

# When in meetings, be attentive to your body language. Speak clearly and considerately when addressing others.

# Be precise

# Remain on topic. Agendas must be followed, and agendas are agreed between the Chair and Town Clerk/relevant officer. Motions for debate can be submitted to the Town Clerk using the Motion Request Form.

# Be prepared

# Good decision-making is based on meaningful contribution and debate. Members should thoroughly review all materials provided in advance of a meeting, including the agenda and supplementary documents.

# Be punctual

# It is beneficial for members to arrive 10-15 minutes before the meeting starts, an to stay for the duration of the meeting. If you are going to be late, please advise the relevant officer prior to the meeting and if you must leave prior to the anticipated finish time, please make this known before the meeting commences.

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# Mobile Phones Mobile phones are not permissible as a viewing device.

# Mobile phones should be switched off or to silent during the meeting.

# Civility and Respect Pledge

# has signed the ‘Civility and Respect’ Pledge, demonstrating that it is committed to treating members, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

# Pre-determination It is very likely that members will be predisposed to a particular view on an issue or question which needs to be formally decided at a meeting. The views of members on a particular topic or a certain issue might even be known by others. As a member operating within a political environment, you should not be afraid to express views on issues. Indeed, it is entirely acceptable in law for a member to be predisposed to a certain viewpoint that they would like to be agreed at a meeting. However, in doing so it is important that you avoid giving the impression that you have already made up your mind and that your part in the decision is a foregone conclusion. This is because the decision made at a meeting (council, committee or sub-committee) is at risk of being deemed invalid or quashed if it can be demonstrated the member(s) had appeared to exercise bias or had a closed mind when they voted.

# A member must be open to fair consideration of the information and argument that is presented at the meeting. In a legal action challenging the validity of a resolution because of the apparent bias or predetermination of a matter by member(s), the court would ask from the perspective of a fair-minded and well-informed observer whether the member(s) had refused to consider relevant information or views at a meeting before they voted on the issue.

# Guidance

# It is always advisable to avoid giving the impression that you have made up your mind prior to the decision-making meeting and hearing the officer’s presentation.

# Try to avoid doing or saying something before the proper decision-making meeting takes place that shows you have already – and finally – made up your mind on the issue.

# If you are unsure or have concerns regarding pre-determination, please speak to the Town Clerk.