

BEACONS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

CODE OF CONDUCT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Code of Conduct is designed to assist the Beacons Partnership Board, Public Agencies Forum, Voluntary Sector Consortium, Residents' Forum, Task and Sub Groups and staff and project officers to function efficiently and to understand what conduct is expected when working within the Partnership and its structures.
- 1.2 The Code has been developed in recognition that any Partnership will be made up of a diverse set of individuals who will have interests, motivations, expectations and characters which may be similar but also at times may be conflicting.
- 1.3 The Code has been developed in line with the seven principles of public life as described in the Nolan Committee Report on Standards in Public Life :-

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

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 the performance of their official duties.

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.

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;

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;

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; and

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

- 1.4 This Code should not be confused with the procedures already agreed for the operation of the Partnership (for example, Standing Orders, Terms of Reference and Declaration of Interest procedures for the Board; Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and elections procedures for the Residents' Forum; jointly agreed Statements of Intent; Partnership wide policies focusing on Equality and Fairness, Complaints and Praise and Customer Care; or City Council's Code of Conduct for employees), but should be used to underpin and support these procedures

2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 Individuals must not discriminate against people they come into contact with during their work with, or on behalf of, the Beacons Partnership on the basis of their ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, religion, disability or age. We are all different and it is expected that this diversity will be respected and welcomed.
- 2.2 All individuals will be expected to comply with Equal Opportunities legislation and the Beacons Equality and Fairness policy.
- 2.3 In all the Partnership's work this should be demonstrated by:
 - Not making assumptions about a person or a group of people;
 - Not making judgements about a person or group of people; and
 - Not discriminating against any person or group of people on the basis of their ethnic origin, gender, religion, sexuality, disability or age.

3. BEHAVIOUR

During Meetings

- 3.1 Much of the work of the Beacons Partnership will be undertaken at different meetings. The effectiveness of these meetings is critical because they are the principal decision making tool of the Partnership and a critical aspect of wider community and partner involvement. The behaviour of participants is important to the success of the meeting. Many people lack the confidence to express themselves fully, whereas some find it all too easy to dominate. Effective meetings can

be achieved if all individuals are committed to some simple ground rules for behaviour before and during meetings.

Individuals have a responsibility to be properly prepared for meetings by reading the paperwork beforehand and by committing themselves to attending meetings as required;

Individual and personal disputes should not be allowed to affect conduct within the meeting but should be resolved elsewhere;

All contributions should be addressed to the meeting via the Chair. Individuals wishing to speak should seek the attention of the Chair and wait their turn to speak only when directed by the Chair;

Individuals should not have meetings within meetings by discussing issues with other individuals or groups of individuals when another person has been directed by the Chair to speak. All comments and queries should be directed to the whole meeting via the Chair;

Individuals should respect to others and the contributions they make, by not interrupting when someone is speaking even when you may not agree with what they are saying;

In contributing to the meeting individuals will ensure that comments they make do not amount to a personal attack on another individual and should avoid using heated or emotional language and behaviour;

Individuals should be constantly aware in their remarks of their equal opportunities responsibilities and avoid the use of potentially offensive language and comments.

Individuals should above all remember that Partnership work means not always getting the decision you want and accepting the responsibility of abiding by majority decisions.

Outside Meetings

3.2 It is just as important that individuals conduct themselves appropriately

outside of official meetings since they will be seen as representatives of the Partnership and its views in a number of other circumstances including non partnership meetings. Some of the issues to consider are outlined below.

Confidentiality

Partnership meetings may occasionally receive information which is not in the public domain often relating to individuals, organisations or financial matters. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that this information remains confidential to the meeting unless prior authorisation has been given by the Chair for this to be discussed elsewhere. Individuals must never use confidential information for their personal advantage or the advantage or disadvantage of anyone known to them or to disadvantage or discredit the Partnership.

Collective Decisions

Individuals will inevitably have differences of opinion on issues debated at meetings. After full discussion, when the meeting has reached a conclusion all individuals must uphold this decision. Speaking against agreed decisions in public will only serve to undermine the Partnership and individuals have a responsibility to stand by collective decisions and present a united front.

Communications with other agencies

There will be occasions when individuals will be asked to, or wish to, communicate with external agencies e.g. Government Office, the City Council, the press etc. In order to ensure they are fully apprised of the latest information and that communications are consistent throughout the organisation, they should consider, where appropriate, contacting the Principal Regeneration Officer (or another senior Partnership Officer in his absence) to get appropriate advice and guidance.

Hospitality and Gifts

Individuals must declare any gifts or hospitality they are offered in connection with their role within the Partnership to the Principal Regeneration Officer/Chair. Anything which could be construed as a means of influencing the way in which decisions of the Partnership are made should be refused. Advice should be sought from the Principal Regeneration Officer/Chair if in doubt before accepting.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Some issues of behaviour and conduct relate to a lack of understanding of the various roles and responsibilities of the different individuals and groups within which the Partnership operates.

Staff

It is the role of the Principal Regeneration Officer to implement the Board's

decisions and to manage on a day-to-day basis the affairs of the Partnership, including the staff team, within the budgets, legal and statutory framework and other relevant government criteria set.

The role of the staff team is to ensure the development and delivery of the aims, objectives and targets set down in the Beacons for Brighter Future Delivery Plans under the direction of the Beacons Partnership Board. Beacons Partnership staff and their day-to-day management rests with the Principal Regeneration Officer. It is not the role of Board members or others to act as managers of the staff team, nor to give direct instructions to members of staff. Any requests or issues relating to the work of staff members should always be directed to the Principal Regeneration Officer for action.

The Beacons Partnership Board

The Partnership is led by the Beacons Partnership Board who have overall responsibility for the management and development of the regeneration programme. The Board steers the direction of the overall Initiative, manages the development and operation of the Partnership and its programme and takes responsibility for approving the expenditure of SRB / NDC funds ensuring that expenditure is in accordance with the Delivery Plan. The Board provide guidance to delivery agents of their responsibilities in terms of both finance and outputs.

The Public Agencies Forum

The Public Agencies Forum has been set up to shadow the Partnership Board and be accountable to them. Membership of the Forum includes all key service providers who work in the area together with the resident representatives on the Board. This ensures accountability, transparency and serves as constant reminder to agencies that local people expect and deserve efficient, effective, and high quality services. The purpose of the Forum is 'To take the lead in ensuring that all services are relevant and accountable to local people; developing good practice, best value and joined up service delivery through organisational and cultural change; and ensuring the effective targeting of mainstream resources' and all members have signed up to this statement.

The Voluntary Sector Consortium

The Consortium is made up of all voluntary and community groups who are active in the area. The Consortium is represented on both the Board and the Public Agencies Forum as well as participating in Task Group meetings as appropriate. The Consortium enables sharing of information on local activity; facilitates joint working; and allows groups to have effective input into the work of the Task Groups and comment on the overall direction of the programme and the deliberations of the Partnership Board.

The Residents' Forum

Membership of the Residents Forum comprises representatives from the local Tenants and Residents Associations in the area. The meetings examine progress made within the Task Groups and on the programme generally, as

well as receiving presentations from a wide variety of organisation and initiatives that work in the area. There is opportunity to raise concerns about particular problems, challenge service delivery standards and discuss how particular concerns can be addressed through the Programme.

The Thematic Task Groups and Sub Groups

There are six thematic task groups whose membership comprises a range of agencies with a particular interest in the programme area and local people; and a range of Sub Groups focusing on particular projects or issues. These Groups are responsible for suggesting and developing the projects that will eventually be put forward for funding from the programme and for developing a particular aspect of activity.

The roles of Chair and Deputy Chair

These are key roles throughout Partnership structures play an important part in the management of meetings and the conduct of individuals representing the Partnership. Their responsibilities of these roles:

- Keeping order and making sure that the agreed rules of conduct are followed
- Minimising any sense of confusion and frustration by ensuring that the agenda is properly covered, that jargon is not used or is explained and that individuals understand the debate and what decisions are required and why.
- Making sure that everyone who wants to contribute is encouraged to do so
- Summarising the decisions taken and the action points which arise from this.
- Acting as an independent referee when required

5 BREACHES OF THE CODE

- 5.1 Using the principles above, it is anticipated that the majority of issues that occur across the Partnership should be able to be resolved by consensus. If this proves impossible a more formal process of mediation should be available. This process will enable the reasons behind any breach/breakdown in relationship or communication to be explored; provide an opportunity to learn from the past and avoid any repetition in the future; encourage co-operation; and gain commitment to the development of a positive ongoing relationship between parties.
- 5.2 If all parties agree that mediation is an option they would like to explore, the process should be undertaken confidentially by a skilled and neutral Chair and through a process acceptable to all parties.
- 5.3 Where a breach of the code occurs during a meeting, participants

should raise the issue as a point of order through the Chair. If the Chair agrees that a breach has taken place, an informal warning will be issued to the person concerned. If an individual breaches the code for a second time, they warned formally about their conduct and this will be minuted. Subsequent breaches will result in the participant being asked to leave the meeting. Following exclusion from a meeting the matter should be raised by the Chair with the Principal Regeneration Officer who will attempt to resolve the situation informally. Should this prove impossible, the matter should be referred for mediation.

- 5.4 Where the breach of code takes place outside a meeting, the issue should in the first instance be referred to the Principal Regeneration Officer. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved, mediation (as above) should be offered in order to progress the matter.