

Motion from Cllr Sidaway to add the following new standing order to Broadstone Standing Orders.

Duty of the Council to Remain Apolitical and Act Collectively

1. Purpose and Scope

This Standing Order ensures that the Town Council conducts its business in a manner that is apolitical, impartial, and collectively responsible, acting always in the best interests of the community.

It applies to all councillors, co-opted members, officers, volunteers, and any person acting on behalf of the Council.

2. Principle of Political Neutrality

The Council shall operate as a corporate body and shall not act, communicate, or make decisions in a way that promotes, endorses, or advances the interests of any political party, political group, or individual political agenda.

- Councillors may hold political views, but Council decisions must not.
- Council communications, branding, events, and publications must remain strictly neutral.

For further clarity, see political neutrality guidance.

3. Collective Decision-Making

The Council shall make decisions collectively, through properly convened meetings, in accordance with statute and Standing Orders.

- Decisions are made by majority vote, unless legislation requires otherwise.
- Once a decision is made, it becomes the corporate position of the Council.
- No individual councillor, including the Chair, may unilaterally determine Council policy or action.

Councillors must participate constructively in collective decision-making; see collective governance principles.

4. Duty to Support Resolutions of the Council

All councillors shall:

- Respect and uphold the corporate decisions of the Council, even where they personally voted against them.
- Refrain from publicly undermining or contradicting Council resolutions when acting in an official capacity.
- Clarify when speaking in a personal capacity that they are not representing the Council's position.
- Ensure that officers are given clear, unified direction based on the formally adopted decisions of the Council.

This does not prevent councillors from expressing personal views outside Council business, provided they do not imply Council endorsement or misrepresent the Council's agreed position.

5. Conduct of Councillors

All councillors shall:

- Declare political interests where relevant as per the Declaration of Interests held centrally.
- Avoid party-political language in debate or motions.
- Not use Council meetings, resources, or communications for political purposes.
- Work collaboratively and respectfully with colleagues to advance the Council's agreed priorities.

6. Conduct of Officers

Officers must remain politically neutral at all times and shall not:

- Draft or publish material that could reasonably be interpreted as party-political.
- Assist councillors with activities that are political in nature.
- Attend political events in an official capacity unless operationally required.

7. Council Communications

All Council communications must:

- Present information factually and impartially.
- Reflect the corporate position of the Council.
- Avoid any appearance of political alignment.

Press releases or statements to the media may only be issued by the Clerk or an authorised officer.

8. Meetings and Decision-Making

During meetings:

- Motions must relate to Council functions, not party-political matters.
- Debate must be respectful, neutral, and focused on community outcomes.
- The Chair may rule out of order any contribution that is party-political or undermines a corporate decision.

9. Use of Council Premises (or where Council meets) and Resources

Council premises and resources shall not be used for:

- Party-political meetings
- Campaigning
- Distribution of political literature
- Activities that could reasonably be perceived as political promotion

Exceptions apply only where required by law (e.g., elections administration).

10. Breach of this Standing Order

A breach may be referred to:

- The Monitoring Officer,
- The Standards Committee, or
- Any other body with jurisdiction under the Localism Act 2011.

The Chair may require a councillor to withdraw a remark, cease a line of debate, or leave the meeting if behaviour becomes overtly political or undermines collective responsibility.

11. Review

This Standing Order shall be reviewed annually or when relevant legislation or guidance changes.