

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COMMISSION MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION

This code of conduct sets out in written form the agreed ethical standards that inform the conduct of members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, both collectively and individually, in performing their functions and duties.

Background and Context

The Commission was established on 1 January 2004 as the governing body of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service- the service administration for the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Commission is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this code is to set out clearly the principles that guide the Commission and its members in the exercise of their functions, powers and duties under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015 and in meeting their other statutory requirements and obligations.

The objectives of the code are:

- to provide a clear statement of how the Commission conducts its activities for the benefit of all stakeholders of the Houses of the Oireachtas
- to promote and maintain public confidence and trust in the Commission as the public body responsible for the administration of the Houses of the Oireachtas
- to inform and direct the conduct of the management and staff of the Commission – the Houses of the Oireachtas Service
- to promote the highest legal, management and business standards in all activities of the Commission and the Service
- to meet the requirements of best practice in corporate governance and public service management

Application

This code applies equally to all Commission members. It is additional to the codes of conduct and the obligations to register and declare interests under the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001 that continue to apply to Oireachtas members and officeholders who are members of the Commission. The requirements under this Code apply in addition to the obligations under the Ethics Acts which require that Commission members, as designated directors, complete an annual Statement of Interests in January each year. Designated directors must also comply with the guidelines published by the Standards in Public Office Commission on compliance with the Ethics Acts.

The Code also complements the procedures of the Commission as laid down in the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015, together with the rules and practices adopted by the Commission for the conduct of its meetings and business.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The Commission and its members are committed to ensuring the highest ethical standards in their work and will at all times strive to observe this commitment through their observance of the principles of *responsibility, integrity, loyalty, commitment, compliance, information and administration* as set out in this code.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Responsibility

- serve and act in a collective corporate capacity to support the work of parliament and its members as a whole
- accordingly do not represent their own interests or those of their parties or groups or any other interest
- fulfil their obligations under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015 in good faith and with due diligence and care

Integrity

- disclose any personal, business or other interest that they or any connected person may have in matters concerning the Commission or its work
- neither receive or confer any gifts or other benefits nor act in any way that may affect or reflect on the due and impartial performance of their functions
- promote a culture of claiming allowances and expenses only as appropriate to legitimate needs and in accordance with good practice in the public sector

Loyalty

- are loyal to the Commission and are committed to its goals and objectives
- support the Commission in its decisions and in its work to implement them
- defend and protect the Commission's good name

Commitment

- endeavour to attend all meetings of the Commission and its committees
- acknowledge that they have understood and agree to abide by this code of conduct and will review its application at appropriate intervals

THE COMMISSION AND ITS MEMBERS

Compliance

- act in accordance with the rules of procedure and other regulations and guidance adopted by the Commission in its work
- comply with all other prevailing legislative and regulatory measures affecting them

Information

- support the provision of public access to information in a way that enhances the accountability of the Commission
- respect the status of sensitive information and the confidentiality of discussions at meetings of the Commission
- consult with affected third parties in relation to the disclosure of information

THROUGH THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND THE SERVICE , THE COMMISSION—

Administration

- implements best practice in public service administration through its policies and practices generally
- conducts its purchasing and procurement activities in accordance with public procurement requirements and guidance
- complies with statutory obligations regarding the management and disclosure
- implements a travel policy that reflects civil service procedures and other relevant guidance

Accountability

- implements appropriate management and reporting structures to ensure the proper use of its resources
- implements controls, including financial controls, that are adequate to ensure compliance with its policies and to prevent fraud
- ensures that its plans, reports and accounts accurately reflect its activities

Workplace

- promotes positive workplace values for its staff and for Oireachtas members and their staff
- preserves the health and safety of all who occupy or visit the Houses of the Oireachtas
- implements work practices and policies that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable

Fairness

- promotes fairness and equal treatment by ensuring compliance with employment equality, equal status and disability legislation
- implements policies for a safe working environment and ensures that complaints are investigated in accordance with prescribed procedures

Guidance

- provides Commission members with training and information that enables them to discharge their duties
- notifies this code of conduct in writing to each Commission member for their retention and implementation, following its adoption by the Commission
- provides guidance to Commission members to facilitate their understanding and observance of this code.